



## Testimony in Opposition to H7291

April 15, 2026

To: House Labor Committee

Dear Chair and Members of the House Labor Committee,

I am writing today in opposition to H7291.

At the outset, I want to affirm something clearly: We believe educators and school staff should have the right to decide whether to join a union and participate in collective bargaining. That decision is deeply personal, and it should reflect each individual's perspective, experiences, and professional judgment.

Educators choose to work in charter public schools for many reasons. For many, it is the opportunity to work in a public school environment that offers flexibility and encourages collaboration. These schools often create space for teachers and staff to help shape their work, respond to student needs in real time, and contribute to a shared sense of belonging and purpose. That flexibility, belonging, and purpose are part of what draws educators to these settings and helps them grow as professionals while supporting students.

H7291 would change the process by which employees demonstrate support for union representation. The bill permits certification when 30% of employees—fewer than one in three employees—request an election and the majority of employees voting in the election—not the majority of all employees—vote for representation. This bill would also permit unionization if the majority of employees sign cards expressing interest in representation without even holding an election.

While this may appear to expand options, it removes an important safeguard for employees: the ability to vote by private ballot.

A secret ballot protects more than just a vote. It protects privacy, independence, and peace of mind. It ensures that each educator can make a decision without concern about how others may respond. In a workplace built on relationships, that protection matters.

When that layer of privacy is removed, the dynamic shifts. Signing a card is not the same as casting a confidential vote. It can introduce pressure—subtle or direct—and may leave some



employees feeling uncomfortable or exposed. Even the perception of pressure can affect how people engage in the process.

Educators should not have to navigate these decisions in a way that puts their professional relationships at risk. They should be able to consider what is right for them and their school community without feeling unduly pressured by others around them.

Similarly, educators should be able to receive an orientation from a labor organization if they choose to receive one, but they should do so outside of the workday and only if they choose to attend. Requiring employers to dedicate time and resources for a 30-minute orientation—while excluding their participation—disrupts the school day or professional development time and removes educators' decisionmaking rights.

We can uphold the right to organize while also preserving the conditions that allow that right to be exercised respectfully and fairly. Maintaining a secret ballot option ensures that every educator can participate in a process that respects their voice and protects their autonomy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose H7291.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren K. B. Matlach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren K. B. Matlach  
Deputy Director  
Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools