



Providence Student Union

Building student power

763R Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

TO: Senate Education Committee
FROM: Providence Student Union
DATE: April 8, 2026
RE: Testimony in support of SB 2077

Dear Senate Education Committee,

The students and staff of the Providence Student Union are strong supporters of SB 2077: Student member and Teacher of the Year voting rights on the K–12 Council, as giving students a concrete role in decision-making aligns with our mission and values. Voting power for the chairperson on the Elementary and Secondary Council of Education will give the students of Rhode Island a permanent role at the table and ensure that the voices of students are represented when items are voted on.

Our Student Bill of Rights started in 2017, and Article 3 demands that students have the right to provide input. Our public decision-making structures, including the K-12 Council, must reflect this, and student voice should be encouraged.

The ability for a student to vote on education councils is being discussed in many states. In fact, the Los Angeles County Board of Education has two student voting members. This decision is also being discussed in Massachusetts, which we often look to for education decisions and compare ourselves to. Students vote in the interest of students, students attend schools every day, and students know what students need.

In the past, the K-12 Council has voted on the revised high school standards, allocations of funds for student support programs, and school accountability measures. It defeats the purpose of having students in the process if they have no real say. These items would have been stronger if the student chairperson had received a vote.

This is a necessary step towards giving students autonomy. A ‘voice’ with no authority to vote isn’t actual representation. Voting power is necessary to ensure that students are actually able to influence these decisions that will directly affect them. Let Rhode Island take the next step in building student participation and power in public decision-making spaces.

Sincerely,

Providence Student Union Team