

Maria Monteiro
218 Home Ave
Providence, RI 02908

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Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill S2526

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill S2526. As long-time resident of the city of Providence and the state advocating to ensure that families, particularly Black and Brown families, are meaningfully engaged in decision-making that impacts their children's education.

As a former PPSD student, I have both lived experience and community advocacy experience having served on the Community Design Team that helped co-create the Providence Turnaround Action Plan, a member of the PPSD's District Wide Advisory Council, a member of Parents Leading for Educational Equity (PLEE), a member of the RI Coalition of Black Women (RICBW) and a member of the Providence Human Relations Commission. Through these various roles, I have had direct visibility into the current state of planning, coordination, and readiness for transition.

I write in strong opposition to S2526, which would terminate the current state intervention in the Providence Public School District (PPSD) as of July 1, 2026, effectively ending the turnaround plan ahead of its currently authorized timeline.

No demonstrated readiness for transition to local control

I recognize that the Mayor, City Council, and School Board have been and continue to engage in discussions and early efforts related to the return to local control. These include convening conversations, participating in working groups, and signaling interest in changes to governance structures. However, these efforts, while important, do not constitute a comprehensive or actionable transition plan.

At the core of this legislation is an assumption that Providence is prepared to resume full local control of its school system within the next few months. Based on direct engagement across multiple decision-making spaces, we must be clear that neither the City nor the School Board has demonstrated readiness to assume this responsibility.

Importantly, based on direct participation in current working groups, there is no indication that these early-stage efforts can realistically evolve into a comprehensive, fully vetted transition plan within the limited timeframe proposed by this legislation. Ending state intervention without these foundational elements in place would not represent a transition but an unrealistic timeline that poses risk to students.

Developing a responsible transition plan requires:

- Cross-agency coordination
- Legal and governance design
- Budget modeling and fiscal alignment
- Labor and operational planning
- Sustained community engagement and feedback loops
- Phased implementation with oversight

This is multi-year work, not work that can be completed in a matter of months. A premature transition could result in:

- Breakdowns in governance and decision-making authority
- Budget instability and misalignment of resources
- Disruptions to academic programming and student services including those with proven positive results for students
- Reduced accountability at a critical moment of system change
- Reverting back (without meaningful improvements) to previously ineffective systems that did not serve students well prior to the intervention

I believe deeply in local control and in the role of families as partners in governance. Based on direct involvement at multiple levels of policy, governance, and community engagement, I can state unequivocally that Providence is not yet prepared to transition to local control by July 1, 2026.

I urge the Committee to oppose S2526 and instead support a deliberate, transparent, and community-driven transition process that ensures long-term success for students and families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Monteiro