

From: [Nettle & Ash](#)
To: [SLegislation](#)
Cc: akhatana@providenceri.gov
Subject: Testimony in Support of S2526 – Youth Services Provider
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April 8, 2026

The Honorable Hanna M. Gallo, Chair
Senate Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Gallo and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2526 to end Rhode Island's takeover of the Providence Public School District and return the District to the City of Providence on July 1, 2026.

In my work with neurodivergent youth and families, I observe consistent patterns that reflect broader systemic challenges within educational environments. Students who diverge from standardized expectations are frequently identified as needing intervention, while the structural conditions contributing to their difficulties remain largely unexamined. This dynamic often results in a misalignment between student needs and system design, where difference is pathologized rather than accommodated. The implications extend beyond academic performance. When students are repeatedly positioned as “noncompliant,” “behind,” or “difficult,” the impact is cumulative, affecting identity development, self-efficacy, and long-term engagement with educational systems. These outcomes are not incidental; they are predictable consequences of environments that lack sufficient flexibility, responsiveness, and contextual awareness. Sustainable improvement in public education requires more than oversight. It requires adaptive systems that are capable of responding to the nuanced and evolving needs of the communities they serve. This level of responsiveness is inherently relational. It depends on proximity, continuous feedback, and accountability structures that are embedded within the community itself.

While the state takeover of PPSD has brought necessary attention to systemic deficiencies, centralized control alone is insufficient to produce durable, community-aligned transformation. Effective reform must be iterative, locally informed, and grounded in the lived experiences of students and families. Local governance, when supported by appropriate oversight and resourcing, is better positioned to engage in this type of responsive, context-specific work. Returning PPSD to local control represents an opportunity to shift toward a more developmentally attuned and inclusive model of education—one that recognizes variability in learning and behavior as inherent, not exceptional. It allows for the possibility of systems that adapt to students, rather than requiring students to conform to rigid institutional expectations.

We should be building educational systems that are flexible, accountable, and capable of evolving systems that reduce unnecessary barriers to access and engagement, rather than reinforcing them.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass House Bill 7414.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Pohle
Founder, Nettle & Ash

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