

# PROVIDENCE SCHOOL BOARD

## Office of the President

Providence, Rhode Island

April 8th, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Gallo and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I write to you at an important moment for our students and for the future of Providence Public Schools. As the conversation around local control continues, our responsibility is clear: to ensure that, when that moment comes, it lifts our students up and does not slow them down. This is about building a system that is steady, focused, and truly centered on their success.

Attached, you will find a resolution adopted by the Providence School Board on February 18, 2026, in which the Board voted unanimously in support of Senate Bill 2526 to return Providence Public Schools to local control.

Since that vote, I have been engaged in ongoing conversations, in my capacity as School Board President, with Governor Dan McKee and Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green regarding what a responsible and deliberate transition will look like. While those discussions are ongoing, I can say there has been meaningful progress, and I am encouraged by where those conversations are leading. I remain hopeful that we will take the next step forward in a way that reflects the best interests of our students and the Providence community, and the public should anticipate further updates in the coming weeks.

Since January 2025, the Providence School Board has undergone a meaningful transformation. We have moved from a fully appointed body to a 10-member hybrid Board, with five members elected by the people of Providence and five appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Providence City Council. Alongside this shift, the Board has completed well over 40 hours of professional development to ensure we are prepared to lead with clarity, discipline, and purpose.

Over the past year, the Board has strengthened its capacity in student outcomes-focused governance, budget oversight, collective bargaining, ethics, and academic improvement. In partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools, we grounded our work in practices from districts across the country.

We have also taken the time to listen. Through more than 18 community engagement sessions, we worked alongside families and stakeholders to establish clear Goals and Guardrails that reflect the priorities of our community and align with the conditions set by Governor McKee and Commissioner Infante-Green. Those priorities have been shared publicly and are now actively being monitored by the Board, keeping our focus where it belongs, on improving outcomes for our students.

We also took a hard look at our policies. Many had been neglected for decades. Today, those policies are being modernized, with outdated and obsolete provisions removed. At the same time, the Board has strengthened its internal practices by centering student achievement in our agenda-setting, updating our bylaws, and engaging in targeted training to clearly define the roles of the School Board and the Superintendent under Rhode Island law. This work is about clarity, accountability, and making sure we do not repeat the cycle identified in the Johns Hopkins report, where uncertainty in governance led to uncertainty in decisions.

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To support this effort, the Board has established a Return to Local Control Ad Hoc Committee, grounded in one goal: to ensure that this transition is thoughtful, coordinated, and done the right way.

And we have not done this work alone. The Board has built strong partnerships across the city. We meet regularly with Mayor Smiley and his administration, and we remain in close, consistent communication with the Mayor's Office, Providence City Council leadership, local union leadership, district leadership, parent and youth organization leadership, and key partners.

The return to local control brings decisions closer to the classroom and strengthens accountability to families and the community. It ensures that the voices of Providence residents help shape the direction of our schools, while preserving the focus and discipline needed to keep moving forward. In that sense, local control is not just a shift in governance, it is a step toward a stronger, more responsive system for every student we serve.

This is the work your Providence School Board has been doing, a Board that is educated, community driven, diverse, and prepared for this responsibility, one that has put in the time, done the training, listened to its community, and built the foundation to lead. And I will be honest, many have doubted this Board, and many will continue to, but that has not slowed us down one bit, it has only strengthened our focus and our resolve. And I will say this with confidence, I would put this School Committee up against any in the state, because of the work it has done, the commitment it has shown, and the clarity of its purpose, all grounded in a single goal, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, because when leadership is clear, organized, and aligned at the top, it creates the conditions for success throughout the entire system.

And I will say this plainly and without hesitation: this Board is ready. We are ready because of the work that has been done. We are ready because of the systems that have been built. And most importantly, we are ready because our students deserve a governance structure that is focused, accountable, and driven by their success.

This moment is not about us. It is about them. And I promise you that, as long as I am School Board President, we will not repeat the same cycles that led us here. We are prepared to meet this moment with the seriousness, the discipline, and the commitment our students deserve.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Ty'Relle Stephens  
President, Providence School Board

