



Testimony Opposing Senate Bills 2784 and 2787 Relating to the Establishment of Charter Public Schools

May 13, 2026

To: Senate Education Committee

I am writing to express strong opposition to Senate Bills 2784 and 2787.

To understand why these bills would be so damaging, we must understand how families actually access these public schools. In Rhode Island, we have an enrollment process that ensures fairness for all kids.

When a family decides a charter public school might be the right environment for their child, they complete a brief and easy-to-fill-out form through EnrollRI. EnrollRI is overseen by the Rhode Island Department of Education, not any individual school. This form only collects basic contact and residency details. Despite the misinformation that is often shared on the charter public school enrollment process (including during today's hearing), I want to explicitly clarify that no information regarding a student's educational needs or demographic information are collected during this process. That means, no information on a student's:

- Disability or IEP status,
- Multilingual learner status,
- Race or ethnicity, and
- Academic records, test scores, or recommendation letters.

All this information is verifiable by viewing the form on EnrollRI and can be confirmed by RIDE.

Charter public schools are in high demand. Because of this, the state of Rhode Island has determined that to ensure fairness, it must engage in a lottery process. RIDE manages this blind lottery.

Charter public schools have no say in who ultimately enrolls in their schools. In fact, schools do not even see the names or profiles of the children applying until after the independent lottery finishes and RIDE provides the final enrollment lists. Only after a family has decided to enroll their child in a specific charter public school is that school allowed to request additional details like an IEP. These details help the school prepare to welcome and support that student.

The impact of a fair, blind lottery system is evident in who charter public schools serve. Statewide charter public school schools serve a range of students, including 75% of whom are eligible for free and reduced



price lunch, 26% are multilingual learners, and 15% are differently abled learners. Charter public school students represent the student populations from their sending communities.

The state's process to manage charter enrollment is rooted in fairness. It helps to ensure every child has a fair opportunity to attend a school that is the right fit, regardless of their background or learning needs. **And across all demographics and legislative districts, Rhode Islanders have made their position clear: Our public education is stronger when families have high quality public school options.**

Earlier this year, Expedition Strategies — a nationally respected polling firm that has worked with former Governor Raimondo, Attorney General Neronha, and Lieutenant Governor Matos — conducted a statewide K-12 public education poll. The poll surveyed 800 likely Rhode Island general election voters and included oversamples of Democratic primary voters, Hispanic and Latino voters, and K-12 parents.

The poll found universal agreement among RI voters that families should be able to decide which type of public school best meets their child's needs. Voters want more options, not fewer. The poll showed widespread opposition to the proposed moratorium legislation before you today. The poll also demonstrated widespread support for charter public schools and for the expansion of charter public school seats. These trends were consistent across all Demographics, but universal in the Hispanic/Latino community, where 80% of Hispanic/Latino K-12 parents support expanding charter public schools.

On behalf of the League, the over 3,000 families currently on waiting lists for a charter public school seat, and the 88% of voters who support families' right to choose the public school that is the right fit for their child, I urge you to oppose S2784 and S2787. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren K. B. Matlach".

Lauren Matlach
Deputy Director, Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools