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To: [SLegislation](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of S2787
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Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Quite simply, please support S2787, which is proposed legislation to establish a temporary charter school moratorium and reduce the statewide charter cap from 35-25.

As a retired public school teacher (and product of the public school system), I continually advocate for my profession and public education. For a number of years, the encroachment of charter schools has continually gained momentum. The idea that this type of setting would provide the potential to incubate and develop educational practices that could be incorporated into the public school systems was just that...an idea that, unfortunately, had never materialized. At one point in time, many had questioned the charter school "lottery" selection process that was more selective in design. The term 'public' would be eventually added to the marketing of charter schools, yet certain expectations were not made of them as they were of traditional public school systems. I ask, why would anyone from the business sector be a part of this business venture unless there was some financial gain? Did anyone ever question funding sources that come from outside of Rhode Island? As time progressed, I became acutely aware of the impact charter schools had and continues to have upon the public school system and the financial strain that had resulted as funds had transferred from the local school departments as "tuition to other public" to charter schools.

Why do urban core communities, such as Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket, now have a disproportionate number of charter schools? Do our demographics enable the charter schools to qualify for other types of funding? Right now, the Pawtucket School Department is experiencing a deficit in the millions which could be attributed to funds following the charter school path when students leave. A deficit that will result in the depletion of services, personnel, and the ability to best serve the needs of our students.

The traditional public schools do not market themselves to the general public as charter schools do. I am not aware of any traditional public schools system that has a marketing department or budget for the marketing of their wonderful education programs. There have been, however, a few school departments that have been able to advertise their CTE (career tech ed.) programs. There has never been a pull-off ad on the Valley Breeze for a traditional public school department.

It is interesting to note that there are traditional public schools that are out-performing charter schools, yet they do not receive attention from local news channels. Perhaps there is a perception that charter schools are not public after all, thus, not subject to the same scrutiny as traditional schools are.

When financial studies are done, are all charter schools included along with the traditional public schools? Personally, only a small percentage of the general public truly knows of or understands the financing behind charter schools. Are many aware of

the financial impact created by charter schools upon the public school departments as the depletion of funds occurs every time a student leaves for a charter school? These deficits could mean facing potential tax increases. There are expenses that remain constant within a public school system even as funds are depleted. New deficits create new challenges for a school department and the citizens of its city.

As cities across Rhode Island face potential deficits during this time of economic uncertainty, why has Rhode Island become the epicenter (concentration) for charter school in the Northeast?? More than 60 education entities exist in this small state, which includes 24 charter LEAs. Each of these have separate administrative and operational costs. Of approximately 140,000 students in Rhode Island, approximately 13,000 students are in charter schools - more than neighboring Connecticut (approx. 500,000 students statewide). Massachusetts has a limit of 9% of district spending in most communities. They had identified a need to address the potential drain and the consequences that result from the parallel systems created by charter schools.

Recently, I was amazed by the number of charter school lobbyists who have been at the State House, along with the media campaigning that some charter school advocate groups are currently conducting. Advertising requires a large budget...public school departments don't have those types of finances afforded to them for this type of campaigning. When it comes to transparency and accountability, where is that type of financing coming from?

Now is the time to pause the expansion of charter schools and limit the cap at 25. A pause is needed to allow a commission to review the funding and expenses involved with and behind charter schools. The pause would also allow for a study of the negative impact that the unchecked expansion of charter schools is having upon local municipalities. For me, the traditional public school system should be given the opportunity to be on, as the expression goes, a level playing field with charter schools. Unfortunately, it's not!

Your time and attention to this testimony and potential support of S2787 is valued and appreciated!

**Respectfully,
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Pawtucket Resident & active in this community!
Proud Pawtucket Public School Teacher (over 30 years!)
Supporter of Public Education**