

Testimony in Opposition of SB2787

May 13, 2026

TO: Senate Education Committee

My name is Andrew MacMannis, and I serve as Chief of External Affairs for Collective Action for Education. Both as an organization and personally, I believe deeply that all children deserve access to a great public school, and that families deserve the opportunity to seek out the best fit for their children. For those reasons, I stand in firm opposition to Senate Bill 2787.

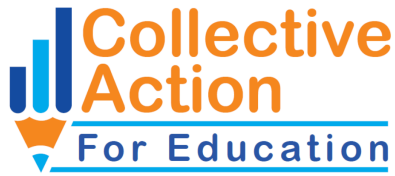
As written, this bill could lead someone to believe there has been a sudden increase in the approval of new charter public schools in Rhode Island. That is simply not the case. Over the past ten years, there have been only four final approvals, along with the De La Comunidad Bilingual Charter School, which currently holds preliminary approval for a planned launch in the 2027–28 school year. This is not a surge. It is the result of a careful, deliberate, and highly selective process.

That selectivity exists because the authorization process led by the Rhode Island Department of Education is widely viewed as a national gold standard. According to the 2025 CREDO report from Stanford Center for Research on Education Outcomes, RIDE's 2017 updates to charter accountability procedures simplified rating conditions and reduced uncertainty in how charter public schools are assessed. These updates strengthened an already rigorous system.

Applications for new charter public school seats are posted publicly, and RIDE invites Local Impact Analyses from communities. Each applicant also undergoes a 60-plus day public comment process that includes hearings in the communities where the school would be located and from which it is expected to draw students. The process is highly transparent for proposals that reach public posting. *What is less visible are the dozens of applications that are screened out before they ever enter public conversation.* This authorization process is among the most demanding in the country.

What we should do today is listen to families and students. These are the same families submitting more than 30,000 applications for just about 3,000 available seats. They are seeking opportunity in the same way families pursue career and technical education pathways. These are public education dollars supporting public school education. In Rhode Island, 88% of families agree it is good that families can decide which type of school meets their child's needs.

We do not question families who seek private schools or homeschooling. Charter public school families, however, often find themselves in a constant defense of their very existence. The key difference is that statewide, charter public schools serve approximately 75 percent students of color and 63 percent students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. When we are talking



about limiting access to charter public schools, this is the student population that we are talking about.

If the goal is to address funding inequities or identify funding solutions, we should instead look to the recommendations outlined in the Rhode Island Foundation Blue Ribbon Commission report.

If the goal is to ensure a rigorous authorization process, we should trust the Rhode Island Department of Education. That process already exists.

If the goal is to support families and students, we should listen to their voices and respect their choices.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew MacMannis".

Andrew MacMannis