

My name is Amaris Garcia. I am a social studies and ethnic studies educator at TAPA and am a 2026 Civic Education Teacher of the Year. I stand here today in opposition to both Rhode Island charter moratorium bills, especially H7415/S2787. Families and students deserve more educational opportunities — not fewer.

A one-size-fits-all system does not automatically create equity or cultural responsiveness. In many cases, it does the opposite.

Our students come from different cultural backgrounds, language experiences, and learning needs. What works in one school community may not work in another. Equity means meeting students where they are — not forcing every child, and educator, into the exact same model regardless of their needs.

I previously worked at a district public school and have since joined the staff at TAPA. I was reluctant to work at a charter at first due to the reasons provided in this legislation. However, I choose to stay at a charter public school because... At TAPA I can teach Ethnic Studies, Civic-engagement, Social-Emotional Learning, current events, and other categories of education I see my students needing throughout the year. At TAPA we set high expectations, yet adapt to the changing needs of our students from day to day and year to year. We specialize in teaching the performing arts, and many of us incorporate visual arts in our core content classes. Our charter design entrusts teachers with the freedom and flexibility to create lessons that will engage a diversity of students

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IF NO TIME: ....Even students who are struggling academically can thrive in the arts, and quite often they do better academically when they can practice their passion daily.

For many families, charter public schools provide individualized support and educational approaches that better serve students who may struggle in traditional settings. This is especially important for multilingual learners, students with IEPs, students from historically underserved communities, and students with learning gaps who often benefit from more flexibility and personalized instruction.

We should not remove options from families who are actively searching for public schools where their children can succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Options are not the enemy of equity; options help create equity.

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As the current MTSS Coordinator at TAPA, I am entrusted with the role of uniting our adults to create sustainable goals for our struggling students. This requires our adults to know our students well and take the time to brainstorm supports. Our small close-knit community allows us to do this work. Even students who are struggling academically can thrive in the arts, and quite often they do better academically when they can practice their passion daily.

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Instead of limiting opportunities through a moratorium, Rhode Island should focus on improving all schools while allowing innovative and responsive educational models to continue serving students.

Our goal should be expanding access to quality education — not restricting it. Thank you.