

My name is Evan Preisser; I am a parent of two former charter public school students and a community representative on the board of the Compass School. My children have attended public schools all their lives and are currently students at South Kingstown High School. Their experiences have led me to see charter public schools and district public schools as complementary rather than competitive.

The fundamental goal of public education is to help each child thrive; providing publicly run, community-led educational options gives children and their parents a chance to find suitable learning environments. My son stayed at Compass through eighth grade, while my daughter left Compass after fourth grade because she wanted a bigger school. They appreciated having options and each feels they made the right decision for themselves. Even though my children are no longer at Compass, I continue to remain involved with the school as a board member because I want other families to have the same choices that mine did.

Both charter public schools and career and technical education programs exist to broaden the range of taxpayer-funded educational opportunities and provide a targeted complement to district public schools. Importantly, these charter public and CTE options only exist because children and their parents have advocated for and used them. Their presence allows district public schools to focus on their core mission rather than having to choose between spreading themselves too thin or leaving some students unserved.

Research has shown that children who feel in control of their lives grow up happier and healthier; providing them with options, even if they don't choose to take them, improves the overall educational climate. Our family chose to live in RI rather than CT in part because of the greater range of public school options – for us and many others, such choices are critical to settling in the Ocean State.

It saddens me to think that RI is rethinking its approach. This bill is not a pause; it's a permanent reduction in opportunities for kids. This bill would prohibit new charter public schools by reducing the cap to the number of current charters. Reducing public education options for RI children will hurt students and families. Please vote no on H7415/S2787.

Evan Preisser