

From: [Kristin Petrarca](#)
To: [SLegislation](#)
Subject: S2787-Charter Moratorium & Cap Reduction
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Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for legislation establishing a charter school moratorium and reducing the charter school cap in Rhode Island. While educational options matter, Rhode Island must address the growing fiscal and structural strain charter expansion is placing on our public school system.

Public schools serve every student who walks through the door, including students with the highest academic, behavioral, multilingual, and special education needs. Unlike charter schools, district schools are required to educate every child and continue serving students who return mid-year, often without corresponding funding adjustments.

Rhode Island has created a fragmented parallel education system that diverts resources away from neighborhood public schools. The state now operates more than 60 educational entities, including 24 charter Local Education Agencies (LEAs), each carrying separate administrative and operational costs. At a time of declining student enrollment and major investments in school construction and modernization, the continued expansion of parallel systems raises serious concerns about long-term fiscal sustainability.

The burden of charter growth has fallen disproportionately on Rhode Island's urban communities. According to FY2025 House Fiscal data, charter and state school enrollment represents 27.6% of resident students in Providence, 40.8% in Central Falls, and 22.8% in Pawtucket. These enrollment shifts result in major transfers of both students and funding, destabilizing districts already serving high concentrations of high-need learners.

Rhode Island serves approximately 140,000 students statewide, with nearly 13,000 enrolled in charter schools—more than Connecticut, despite Connecticut educating over 500,000 students. Yet unlike Massachusetts, which places fiscal protections on charter tuition growth, Rhode Island has no comparable safeguards for municipalities impacted by charter expansion.

Charter schools were originally envisioned as small-scale innovation centers designed to strengthen public education systems by sharing successful practices. Rhode Island is no longer expanding niche innovation programs; it is building a permanent parallel system. Meanwhile, traditional public schools continue serving the overwhelming majority of high-need students while resources shift away.

The communities with the highest student needs are bearing the greatest fiscal burden from charter expansion. Rhode Island's poorest urban districts are being destabilized while many suburban communities remain insulated from these impacts.

A charter moratorium and cap reduction would allow Rhode Island time to assess fiscal impacts, accountability, and long-term educational planning before expanding further. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation to protect the sustainability and equity of our public education system.

Sincerely,

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