



WEST WARWICK TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

American Federation of Teachers, Local 1017

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To: Senate Education Committee
From: Paul Bovenzi, President West Warwick Teachers' Alliance (WWTA)
Date: May 11, 2026
Re: Charter Moratorium /Cap Reduction

Testimony in Support of 2026-S2787 (Senator Murray, et. al.)

The WWTA strongly supports this bill which lowers the cap on charter schools and puts a moratorium on the approval of charters for the next three years. You will hear a lot of testimony which highlights the profound financial strain that the current charter school funding structure places on our traditional public school districts, all of which I agree with. However, I want to focus briefly on why the charter school experiment nationwide and specifically in Rhode Island is a failure.

We are coming up on 30 years of charter schools in Rhode Island, and the promise of innovation, sweeping reforms and glowing student outcomes has not materialized.

Most charter schools perform no better—and often worse—than traditional public schools. Many large-scale studies have shown no consistent academic advantage for charter students especially once demographics are controlled for, and although high-performing charters exist, they are not representative of the sector as a whole making them unreliable models for broad policy.

Students with disabilities, English-language learners, and those requiring intensive support are often underrepresented in charter schools. Enrollment practices—such as complex applications, mandatory parent involvement, or strict discipline policies—can discourage higher-need families. This leaves traditional public schools with a disproportionate share of high-cost students, while receiving fewer resources to support them.

In contrast to the promise of innovation, many charters replicate traditional approaches rather than pioneering new ones. Successful innovations are rarely transferred back into public systems. The charter sector's variability makes it difficult to scale any effective practices

Taken together it's hard to deny that the charter school movement has not fulfilled its promises of higher achievement, innovation, equity, or system-wide improvement. Instead, I see a fragmented landscape that strains public schools, lacks consistent accountability, and leaves vulnerable students behind.

As President of the West Warwick Teachers' Alliance, I respectfully ask that you support and advance SB2787. Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

A Union of Professionals