

From: [Jennifer Walker](#)
To: [SLegislation](#)
Subject: Charter School Moratorium Bill
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Charter School Moratorium bill that will be heard tomorrow, May 13th.

I am a proud principal of the Leviton Dual Language School in Providence, a 28-year veteran of the Providence School district, and a proud graduate of Classical High School, where as a senior, committed to teaching in Rhode Island, I received the state's "Best and Brightest" scholarship towards my pursuit towards a degree in elementary education.

It was early in my career when charter schools began, and I was not opposed to the initial idea - that a school following a mission and vision that was not addressed in any current public school system could fulfill a need for a specific and relatively small population of students. The MET School, TAPA, The Rhode Island Nurses' Institute, and ICS (where I sent my own daughter, largely to avoid being her first grade teacher) all come to mind. These schools met/meet a need that traditional schools could/can not, and drew from a limited population in each sending community. The effect on the student population and the teaching body was marginal and manageable.

Unfortunately, although many do still exist, small and specialized charter schools are not the majority of what we are seeing today. Today we are seeing big business funded entities - such as Achievement First, Blackstone Valley Prep, and Beacon Charter Schools - who are expanding at rates that our educational infrastructure cannot sustain. These schools (and all charter schools) pull not only per pupil costs from each sending district but also, in many cases, qualified educators who are at a severe shortage nationally.

The fact remains that the majority of Rhode Island students attend public schools - the most recent data suggests 86% of students (including both charter and private enrollment). The majority of the students in our state deserve the majority of our resources, both human and capital. However, public systems, particularly the urban core, continue to cut staff and other programs due to funding deficits. One source reports that Providence alone paid \$51 million to charter schools in 24-25. As a principal and due to budget cuts, over the past 3 years I have been forced to cut 10 positions. With an all time high of 44 staff members, that translates to 23% of my staff. Payments to charter schools are not the only cause of the deficit, but they are a significant contributing factor.

Rhode Island school systems cannot afford any more new charter schools at this time and continue to effectively serve their students. Please support bill S2787 in order to help strengthen the education of the vast majority of our children.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Walker
Principal
Leviton Dual Language School
Providence

