



**Testimony Re: S-2787 -- Relating to Education -- Establishment of
Charter Public Schools
Senate Education Committee
May 13, 2026
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its opposition to Senate Bill 2787 which would place a moratorium on the creation or expansion of charter schools through the 2028-2029 school year.** This bill would also reverse the approvals for new and expanded charter school seats recently approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports both high-quality district schools and high-quality public charter schools.

High-quality education can help lift children out of poverty and ensure that we have the kind of well-educated citizenry and workforce that Rhode Island needs to prosper. Yet only 24% of low-income students, 14% of Multilingual Learners, 25% of Black students, 23% of Hispanic students, and 10% of students receiving special education services are reading proficiently by the end of third grade compared to 38% of third graders overall.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is deeply committed to the students, families, and educators across the state and to the improvement of district public schools. However, we know that changing a system takes time. This is time that students and families should not have to wait for. There is an urgent need to close wide and unacceptable disparities in education opportunities and outcomes based on race, income, language status, and disability.

We support having a strong, diverse array of public charter schools so that families that are underserved in traditional public schools have more choices to meet the needs of their children. Access to high-quality public charter schools provides students and their families with a wider array of educational options that fit their needs and allows them to obtain an excellent education that will prepare them for success in college, their chosen career, and life. **Of the 13,037 students enrolled in public charter schools in Rhode Island on October 1, 2025, 75% were low-income students and over 80% were students of color.**

We know that many have concerns about how charter schools are funded, particularly how they receive funding from the state's funding formula and how local aid is disbursed to charter schools. We agree that this is a critical issue that needs discussion and action; however, **we do not agree that students and families that are seeking school options should be denied opportunities to a high-quality public charter school** while we work to improve the funding formula and investment strategy. Of particular concern, families, communities, teachers, and staff are already planning for expanded and newly established charters based on approvals recently granted through

the state's established process. This bill would overturn those approvals.

The opportunity to have educational options that meet the needs of students is a privilege that many higher-income families exercise regularly. **The pursuit of a high-quality education should not be a privilege, and low-income students and students of color should not have to wait for public charter school options while systems strive to improve.** The demand from families for public charter schools is greater than ever. Last year, families submitted 30,728 applications for just 2,765 available spots.

It is critical that there be both high-quality district schools and high-quality public charter schools. This bill would prevent existing charter public schools from expanding their programs to serve more kids in their communities and would overturn recent approvals. It would also prevent any new charter public schools from opening in our state for the next three years. We ask that you oppose this bill so that a range of options is available to students who need them.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.