

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Victoria Criado, and I live at 15 Belton Drive in Barrington, RI. I am writing to express my opposition to SB2787.

As a Latina, a Barrington resident, a mother to two children who attend Barrington Public Schools, and a first-generation college student, I know how important a thriving public K-12 system is for our country, our democracy, and the economic livelihood of future generations.

I also know that as elected officials you have to balance many competing priorities and viewpoints from your constituents, and **all** RI residents. Today, I am writing to urge you to oppose SB2787, an unnecessary and harmful piece of legislation. This bill is particularly problematic for two key reasons.

First, it includes language that would decrease the already limited charter public school cap from 35 to 25. This is the exact number of charters in Rhode Island today. We already do not have enough seats in our charter public schools to support the number of families, especially our most vulnerable families, who believe that charter public schools would be the best fit for their child. The bill is being branded as a pause, but the actual bill language would lead to a permanent ban on any new charters in perpetuity.

Second, the bill breaks a promise already made to two charter public school communities. Kids, families, and teachers at both De La Comunidad School and The Greene School that were told their schools could open or expand and are now being told this opportunity will be taken away, unfairly and retroactively.

It is bad enough to ask the 9,000 plus families that receive waitlist letters every spring to wait three years for additional seats to open up. But these bills go far beyond that, and extend that wait time indefinitely. In the same way that I reject NIMBYism when it comes to housing policy, I reject it when it comes to our public education system. Lots of different types of public school models strengthen public education, not weaken it. We don't need to only let wealthy families find the right school for their kids. As a progressive Democrat, I believe that I need to live out my values in all realms of public policy, not just some.

Lastly, this is not a zero sum game. Instead of scapegoating charter public school teachers, kids, and families we should be focused on proposals that seek to support and FUND a strong public education system in Rhode Island. Proposals like those put forth by the Blue Ribbon Commission, which focus on reforming a broken public school funding formula. That is the type of legislation that will actually support all public school children.

Please oppose S2787.

Sincerely,

Victoria Criado | 15 Belton Drive, Barrington, RI | victoria.criado@gmail.com