

May 20, 2026

Honorable Hanna Gallo, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

RE: S2934 - An Act Relating to Education - Foundation Level School Support

Dear Chair Gallo and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Caleigh Rockwal and I am a Civics Teacher at Hope High School, the incoming Secretary of the Providence Teachers Union, and a resident of Providence, Rhode Island. I am writing today as a citizen to express my **opposition** to the passage of Bill S2934.

Bill S2934 would rework the salary structure, weaken due process rights, and remove critical job protections for only Providence educators. As a teacher, a union organizer, and a community member dedicated to our city's schools, I am deeply concerned about the effects such changes would have on our entire community. I am also deeply concerned about the way this legislation misunderstands and misrepresents the challenges that PPST faces.

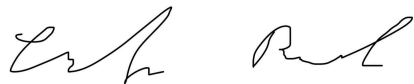
The new salary structure is framed as a way to compensate teachers for taking on additional responsibilities, but that incentive is already included in our contract. It also opens the door for step increases - a benefit meant to acknowledge the expertise of experienced teachers - to be removed. While I believe that teachers should be compensated for the additional roles they take on in a building, I do not believe that should come at the expense of our experienced teachers. I take on more responsibility in my school because I have the time and ability to do so - I am young, healthy, and do not have caretaking responsibilities. Having that time available has no bearing on one's effectiveness in the classroom.

Experience, however, does influence effectiveness. It takes teachers three years on average to become effective instructional leaders. In Providence, one also needs experience working with and teaching immigrant students, multilingual learners, and students experiencing poverty to be truly effective. We already have this experience in our district. Despite the challenges, inefficiencies, and micromanagement brought on by the State Takeover, Providence teachers have persisted and continue to lend their expertise to our district and to our students. Reducing the compensation they earned for their expertise will only push more effective teachers out.

We cannot afford to push any more teachers out. We have lost hundreds of educators to resignations since the beginning of the takeover. We have also lost dozens more to retaliatory non-renewals, like the educators who were targeted last year for their organizing efforts. Removing job protections will only incentivize more high-quality teachers to take their talents elsewhere, while weakening our due process rights will only embolden administrators to remove high-quality teachers they disagree with without recourse.

Providence teachers are not the problem in PPSD; unclear and authoritarian governance structures are. We need to provide more protections and autonomy for experienced, high-quality educators to do what they know is best for students, not take them away. For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject S2934.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caleigh Rockwal', written in a cursive style.

Caleigh Rockwal
36 East St #1
Providence, RI 02906