

Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition to S 2934

Hearing Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 4:00 PM

Submitted by: Jack Doughty

Position: Against S 2934

Dear Debbie Hayden, Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is **Jack Doughty**, a Providence Public Schools Educator, Providence Teachers Union Member, and Brown University Alumni. I am submitting this written testimony in strong opposition to **S 2934**.

I oppose this bill because it would create a separate and unequal legal framework for Providence educators, weaken collective bargaining protections, and make it easier to destabilize the public schools serving some of Rhode Island's highest-need students.

S 2934 explicitly singles out the Providence Public School District. The bill states that, "**In the Providence public school district only, the parties may negotiate alternative salary schedules**" outside the statewide minimum salary schedule structure. It also creates a Providence-specific dismissal and demotion process, stating that "**a principal may dismiss or demote any teacher or other person assigned full-time to the school, subject to the review and approval of the superintendent.**" Finally, the bill allows Providence to suspend teachers due to a "**reduction in force or reorganization,**" while limiting seniority to "**only as a tie-breaker**" in certain personnel actions. ([S 2934, Rhode Island State Senate, Senate Education](#))

Taken together, this language does not merely create flexibility. It creates a pathway for Providence educators to have fewer protections than other educators in Rhode Island. That is especially troubling in a district that has already experienced years of instability under state intervention.

My concern is not only about employment conditions. It is about student opportunity. Collective bargaining agreements do not only protect educators; they help protect the learning conditions of students. When districts gain broader authority to dismiss, demote, reorganize, or reduce staff, the consequences are often felt most deeply by students who rely on stable relationships, specialized services, and experienced educators.

Research on teacher layoffs and turnover supports this concern. Matthew Kraft's study of teacher layoffs found that student achievement declined more when grades lost effective teachers, and [Bleiberg and Kraft's research synthesis](#) concludes that teacher layoffs have harmed student achievement and have been distributed inequitably across schools, teachers, and students. Research on teacher turnover also shows that students in grade levels with higher turnover experience lower achievement, with [especially strong effects in schools serving more low-performing and Black students](#). (Ronfeldt, 2011)

I am particularly concerned that weakening collective bargaining protections in Providence could pave the way for layoffs, school closures, workforce reductions, and further privatization or charterization of public education. In other urban districts, research has documented relationships between school closures, charter expansion, and the restructuring of public education systems. For example, [Green, Sánchez, and Castro's study of Detroit](#) found that charter school openings occurred in concentrated "hot spots" alongside decades of traditional public school closures. Adamson and Galloway's research on education privatization found that charter expansion is concentrated in urban areas serving students of color and that [privatization can exacerbate segregation, particularly for special education students](#).

These patterns matter for Providence. Providence public schools serve large numbers of multilingual learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, and students of color. These students deserve more stability, not less. They deserve fully staffed public schools, collaborative teaching conditions, experienced educators, protected planning time, strong multilingual supports, special education services, and meaningful access to rigorous instruction. A bill that weakens the rights of Providence educators risks weakening the educational infrastructure our students depend on.

I also worry that S 2934 frames Providence teachers as the problem rather than as essential partners in school improvement. The bill's own language calls for "labor-management collaboration" and "granting teachers greater flexibility in the delivery of education to students" ([S 2934, Rhode Island State Senate, Senate Education](#)). Those goals are incompatible with legislation that simultaneously weakens educators' bargaining power and creates Providence-specific pathways for dismissal, demotion, and reorganization. Genuine collaboration cannot be built on unequal rights.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Education Committee to reject S 2934. Providence students do not need a weakened teaching workforce. They need stable public schools, well-supported educators, and a district improvement process rooted in collaboration, equity, and democratic public accountability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jack Doughty

Providence Educator

Mount Pleasant Early College and Career Academy

Against S 2934