

May 19, 2026

**RE: Testimony in Opposition to S2934 (Against)**

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Lauren Miller, and I am a 5th grade teacher at Lillian Feinstein Elementary at Sackett Street in Providence. I have worked in public education for 12 years, all of them dedicated to serving students and families in Providence. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill S2934.

I chose to teach in Providence because I believe deeply in the potential of our students and the importance of strong public schools. Every day, I work with children who face challenges far beyond what many people imagine when they think about education. Some students struggle with chronic absenteeism. Others arrive several years below grade level in reading or mathematics. Many families face housing instability or homelessness. I teach students who are learning English while simultaneously mastering academic content, and I regularly work with parents who are trying their best to support their children but are often unfamiliar with the educational system or unaware of their rights and available resources. Despite these obstacles, our students demonstrate resilience, determination, and tremendous growth when they are supported by experienced, committed educators and stable school communities.

For that reason, I am concerned about S2934 and the message it sends about Providence teachers and public education. While the bill is presented as part of the transition away from state control, it continues to treat Providence differently from every other school district in Rhode Island. If the state believes Providence is ready to move forward from the takeover period, then Providence educators should be afforded the same protections, rights, and expectations that exist elsewhere in the state. Creating a separate set of employment rules for Providence teachers raises serious concerns about fairness and equity.

One of my greatest concerns is the erosion of due process protections and long-standing employment safeguards that have existed to ensure fair treatment of educators. These protections were not created to shield ineffective teaching. Rather, they were designed to ensure that personnel decisions are made consistently, transparently, and based on established standards. When objective protections are weakened and replaced with broader administrative discretion, educators may lose confidence that decisions regarding employment, transfers, assignments, or layoffs will be made fairly and consistently.

Similarly, I am troubled by provisions that diminish seniority and layoff protections for Providence teachers. Seniority has never been about rewarding longevity alone. It recognizes experience, institutional knowledge, and long-term commitment to a district. Experienced educators often serve as mentors, curriculum leaders, and trusted resources for newer staff members. They help create stability within schools and continuity for students. Weakening these protections risks undermining the value of that experience while introducing uncertainty into a profession that already faces significant challenges.

The bill's increased reliance on evaluations and administrative judgment also raises important concerns. While educator evaluations can provide useful information and support professional growth, they are not immune from subjectivity. Even with the best intentions, evaluations can vary between administrators and schools. Educational success is influenced by many factors beyond a teacher's control, including attendance patterns, language acquisition needs, housing instability, family circumstances, and access to outside supports. In a district like Providence, where students often face significant barriers to learning, reducing objective employment protections while expanding the role of subjective evaluations may create unintended consequences and perceptions of unfairness.

I am also concerned about provisions that allow for alternative compensation systems or bonus-based pay structures. Public education succeeds when

teachers collaborate, share resources, mentor one another, and work collectively to support students. Compensation systems that rely heavily on bonuses or discretionary measures can create inconsistency and uncertainty while potentially fostering competition rather than collaboration. They may also leave educators questioning whether compensation decisions are being applied equitably across schools and classrooms. Stability and transparency in compensation systems are important for maintaining trust and professionalism within a district.

At a time when schools across Rhode Island and the nation continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining qualified educators, I worry about the impact S2934 could have on teacher morale and workforce stability.

Providence already faces unique challenges associated with poverty, language diversity, student mobility, and resource needs. The district needs policies that encourage talented educators to build long-term careers here. Instead, this legislation risks sending the opposite message—that teachers in Providence will have fewer protections and less job security than their colleagues elsewhere in Rhode Island.

The students I teach benefit when they have consistent relationships with experienced educators. They benefit when schools can retain knowledgeable teachers who understand their communities and have invested years in building trust with families. Stability matters, especially for children who may already experience instability in other areas of their lives. Frequent turnover disrupts instruction, weakens school culture, and makes it harder to sustain meaningful academic progress. Policies that create uncertainty for educators ultimately affect students as well.

I also find it difficult to reconcile the stated goal of ending state intervention with legislation that preserves extraordinary measures applicable only to Providence. If the state takeover is truly ending, then Providence should be restored to the same framework that governs every other district in Rhode Island. Continuing exceptional policies while declaring the transition complete creates a contradiction that is difficult to justify. It suggests that

Providence remains subject to a different standard despite efforts by educators, students, families, and community members to move forward.

As someone who has dedicated twelve years to public education and who continues to work each day with students facing significant academic and social challenges, I understand the importance of accountability and continuous improvement. I support efforts to strengthen educational outcomes, increase opportunities for students, and ensure that schools are responsive to community needs. However, I do not believe S2934 achieves those goals. Instead, it weakens important protections, creates inequities between Providence and other districts, and risks damaging teacher morale, recruitment, retention, and long-term stability.

I respectfully urge the Senate Education Committee to oppose S2934 and to support policies that strengthen public education while ensuring fairness, consistency, and equal treatment for Providence educators. Our students deserve stable schools staffed by experienced professionals who can focus their energy on teaching and learning rather than uncertainty about their professional protections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Lauren Miller**

5th Grade Teacher

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