

May 18, 2026

Senate Education Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
State House
Providence, Rhode Island

RE: Testimony in Opposition to S2934 (Against)

My name is Nelson Miranda, and I am a Providence teacher writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill 2934.

This bill creates a separate and unequal set of employment rules that apply only to Providence teachers. No other district in Rhode Island is being asked to give up the same rights, protections, and due process standards contained in current law. If these policies are truly good for education, then they should be debated statewide. If they are not appropriate for every district, then Providence educators should not be singled out to lose protections that every other teacher in Rhode Island still keeps.

The language of S2934 repeatedly carves Providence out separately from every other district in Rhode Island. The bill explicitly states that “all local education authorities other than the Providence public school district” will continue under existing protections, while Providence teachers alone would operate under a new system. That should concern every educator and every legislator who believes public employees deserve equal treatment under state law.

Providence teachers have already worked through years of instability under state takeover, constant turnover in leadership, staffing shortages, curriculum changes, and growing demands placed on classrooms. Instead of restoring trust and stability, this bill removes protections and concentrates more power in administrative hands.

One of the most troubling sections of the bill changes tenure and dismissal protections only for Providence teachers. Under current Rhode Island law, teachers in other districts maintain hearing and appeal rights through their school committees and the Department of Education. S2934 replaces that structure in Providence with a separate dismissal system that grants expanded authority to principals and administrators while limiting remedies available to teachers.

The bill even states that the remedies provided through arbitration would become the “exclusive remedies” available to Providence teachers for wrongful termination. That is a major change in due process rights that no other district is being asked to accept.

The legislation also weakens seniority protections during layoffs and reorganizations. Rhode Island has long used seniority as an objective safeguard against favoritism, retaliation, political influence, and inconsistent personnel decisions. S2934 instead shifts Providence toward

systems based heavily on evaluations and locally determined qualifications that can vary widely between schools and administrators.

Even more concerning, the bill allows layoffs and staffing decisions to be influenced by subjective standards while reducing the role of seniority to only a “tie-breaker.” In practice, that gives significantly more discretion to administrators while providing fewer protections to teachers.

Supporters may describe these changes as “flexibility” or “modernization,” but for many teachers this means less job security, less consistency, and fewer protections against arbitrary decision-making.

The bill also allows Providence alone to move away from Rhode Island’s standard salary-step structure. The current statewide framework recognizes years of service, experience, and training. S2934 permits Providence to negotiate alternative compensation systems including bonuses tied to “greater responsibilities.”

While additional compensation opportunities may sound positive, the reality is that bonus-based systems often create inconsistency, favoritism concerns, and instability in compensation. Teachers should not have to compete against one another for administrative approval in order to earn fair compensation. Stable salary schedules exist for a reason: they create transparency, predictability, and fairness.

Providence already struggles with teacher recruitment and retention. Removing protections and creating a separate employment system with weaker safeguards than every other district in Rhode Island will likely make those problems worse. Research consistently shows that school stability and teacher retention are critical factors in improving student outcomes, especially in high-needs districts. Policies that increase uncertainty and reduce morale risk pushing experienced educators away from Providence at a time when students need stability the most.

What makes this especially frustrating is that Providence teachers have continued showing up for students despite years of disruption. Teachers have adapted to changing curriculum mandates, shortages of resources, constant policy changes, and the challenges that came with state control of the district. Instead of rewarding that commitment, S2934 asks Providence teachers alone to give up rights that educators elsewhere in Rhode Island still maintain.

The bill claims to end state takeover while simultaneously preserving extraordinary measures that weaken labor protections only in Providence. That is not equity, and it is not a true restoration of normal governance.

Providence students deserve strong schools, but strong schools are built through collaboration, stability, respect for educators, and investment in classrooms — not by reducing due process rights or weakening employment protections for the people working directly with students every day.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose S2934.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nelson Miranda
Providence Teacher