



Mayor of Providence

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Brett P. Smiley

May 19, 2026

The Honorable Hannah M. Gallo, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Gallo and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I support Senate Bill 2934, *An Act Relating to Education – Foundation Level School Support* sponsored by Senator Zurier. If enacted, this bill would make changes to Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 16, Education with the proposed changes applying only to the Providence Public School District (PPSD).

Senate Bill 2934 would end the state takeover of the Providence Public School District (PPSD) on June 30, 2026 and return PPSD back to local management. The legislation would create a framework intended to support the return to local control and provide the tools and flexibility necessary to continue improving outcomes for students.

As you know, the State of Rhode Island assumed management of PPSD in 2019 following a review by the Johns Hopkins University which revealed significant challenges in the District. Under the State takeover, with the implementation of the Turnaround Action Plan (TAP), PPSD has shown improvement in recent years, however, there is still much more work to be done. Sustained progress will require strong local governance, aligned with municipal support and resources, and consistent community and family partnership.

Over the past three years, my Administration has made education a priority. The City has been preparing for the District's return to local governance by convening stakeholders, developing a framework for a successful return, ongoing collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and PPSD, and making the largest increase to PPSD's budget in 17 years. We are ready for the end of the State's intervention, and Senate Bill 2934 would ensure that the Providence Public School District returns to local control with a strong foundation for continued improvement for students.

This legislation is informed by the findings of the **Special Legislative Commission to Review and Provide Recommendations for Professional and Labor-Management Standards that Provide School-Based Flexibility and Accountability for Employees of Providence Public School**, as outlined in their 2024 report. Created by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 2023, this Commission was tasked with reviewing and recommending professional and labor-management standards for PPSD employees. The Commission found that the current system does not adequately support educators and students. The report highlights national best practices concerning labor-management relations, professional standards,

and educator support, while offering recommendations intended to improve outcomes for Providence students and strengthen the District.

As I noted in my letter of support for the Commission's report submitted to the Senate Education Committee in 2024, investing in stronger supports for PPSD educators will enhance student outcomes, increase teacher satisfaction, and advance the goals outlined in the Turnaround Action Plan. As the City of Providence prepares for the return to local management of Providence Public Schools, this bill is an important step for creating a system that empowers educators and ensures Providence youth receive the world class education they deserve.

I commend Senator Zurier for his steadfast commitment to improving the quality of schools and education for Providence educators, students, and families, and I respectfully urge this Committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 2934.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brett P. Smiley" followed by a vertical line.

Brett P. Smiley  
Mayor