

Dear RI General Assembly,

As a Providence public school teacher, with 30 years of service, **I'm writing today in opposition to Senate Bill S2934 put forth by Senator Samuel D. Zurier.**

This legislation would eviscerate decades-old professional safeguards, salary, and job protections afforded Providence teachers. Although I'm a big believer in productive change when it comes to improving our schools, S2934 would have a chilling effect on teacher morale, retention, and recruitment for years to come.

Let's start with salary. S2934 seeks to do away with or dilute the current "step" salary schedule that Providence teachers have come to know and count on. While certainly not perfect, our current salary structure provides transparency and certainty when it comes to teacher compensation. We accept that being a teacher is a profession where you will spend years – often decades – helping kids grow and learn, with the reasonable expectation that your salary will grow and remain stable from year to year based on objective measures like experience and education.

Under S2934, school districts could replace this objective standard with an alternative teacher pay system that lacks transparency and could leave teachers wondering how their pay will change from year to year.

The new dismissal and demotion rules are similarly troubling. Teachers in Providence already work in some of the toughest classrooms in Rhode Island. Too many kids enter our classrooms carrying the heavy burdens of poverty, trauma, chronic absenteeism, language barriers, housing insecurity, and behavioral issues that are beyond the control of individual teachers.

But this bill doubles down on linking teacher evaluations to dismissal by weakening many of the profession's due process protections. Holding teachers accountable to high professional standards is important, but we can do better than giving school districts unchecked authority to fire or demote teachers for arbitrary, political, or inconsistent reasons.

We should be looking for ways to keep and support highly-effective Providence teachers, not make it more challenging for them to do their jobs.

The answer to improving student achievement in Providence is NOT to strip-away job protections and professionalism from the teachers. Teachers who have chosen to continue teaching and learning in Providence despite years of state takeover, instability, staffing crises, and increased student trauma.

The last thing our schools should be doing during a nationwide teacher shortage crisis is passing legislation that drives veteran teachers out of the profession due to burnout and dysfunction. **Please vote AGAINST S2934 and work towards legislation that:**

- \* empowers what happens in our classrooms by adding support,
- \* addresses the high needs of our students by improving student services,
- \* minimizes disruptions to learning by focusing on behavior,
- \* works with parents to increase student engagement, and
- \* provides teachers with the support they need to help their students succeed.

Providence students deserve great schools. One of the best ways to ensure that great schools exist is to treat teachers like the professionals they are.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

*Steven T. Palumbo*



**Steven T. Palumbo** | Inclusion Teacher  
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*Every Student Matters, and Every Moment Counts*

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