

From: [Sydney White](#)
To: [S Legislation](#)
Subject: Letter of Opposition to Bill #2934
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Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Sydney White, and I am a Kindergarten ESL teacher at Providence Public Schools, currently working at Lillian Feinstein Elementary School at Sackett Street. I have worked in public education for three years, all within Providence schools. I am writing to respectfully express my opposition to Senate Bill S2934 and to urge the Committee to reconsider legislation that would continue to place extraordinary restrictions and vulnerabilities on Providence educators long after the state takeover is intended to end.

I chose to work in Providence because I care deeply about public education and about students who deserve consistency, stability, and meaningful relationships with the adults in their schools. As an ESL teacher in kindergarten, I work with some of our district's youngest learners during one of the most important stages of development. Many of my students are learning English while simultaneously learning how to navigate school for the very first time. They need routines, trust, patience, and educators who are able to remain in their classrooms long enough to build lasting relationships with students and families.

In Providence, educators already work under significant challenges. We serve diverse communities with a wide range of academic, social, behavioral, and language needs. Teachers are constantly adapting instruction, collaborating with specialists, communicating with families, and providing emotional support for children who often come to school carrying far more than anyone realizes. Despite these challenges, there are many dedicated educators who continue showing up every day because they genuinely care about this city and its students.

That is why legislation like S2934 is deeply concerning.

One of my biggest concerns is that Providence continues to be singled out in ways that no other district in Rhode Island is. If the state believes these measures are appropriate educational policy, then they should apply statewide. Instead, this bill creates a separate set of standards and protections specifically for Providence teachers, which sends the message that educators in this district are somehow less deserving of fairness, stability, or due process than educators elsewhere in Rhode Island.

It is difficult to understand the reasoning behind ending state takeover while simultaneously preserving extraordinary powers and reduced protections only in Providence. If the district is moving toward local control again, then educators should also regain the same rights and safeguards afforded to teachers across the state. Continuing these policies creates a contradiction that feels less like a transition out of intervention and more like a continuation of it under a different name.

I am especially concerned about the weakening of due process, tenure protections, seniority protections, and layoff procedures. These protections are often misunderstood by the public, but from an educator's perspective, they are not about avoiding accountability. They are about ensuring fairness, consistency, and transparency within a profession that is already demanding and emotionally exhausting.

Tenure and due process protections help ensure that employment decisions are based on clear evidence and professional standards rather than personality conflicts, favoritism, shifting leadership priorities, or subjective interpretation. Seniority and layoff protections also create predictability and fairness during periods of staffing changes or budget uncertainty. Removing or weakening those systems only in Providence creates instability that will inevitably affect both educators and students.

Another major concern is the increased reliance on subjective evaluations and administrative discretion. Effective teaching is complex, especially in

schools serving multilingual learners, students with interrupted education, and children with varying developmental needs. Many factors that influence student growth are not easily measurable through narrow evaluation systems. When objective protections are replaced with systems that depend heavily on individual administrators' judgment, it opens the door for inconsistency and inequity.

As a newer educator, I value constructive feedback and professional growth. I believe accountability matters. However, accountability should exist alongside fair systems that protect educators from arbitrary or inconsistent decision-making. A healthy school culture depends on trust, collaboration, and professional respect—not fear that employment stability can shift based on changing administrative preferences.

I am also concerned about proposals related to alternative pay structures and bonus-based compensation systems. While performance incentives may sound appealing in theory, education is not a field where student success can always be reduced to numbers or metrics. Schools function best when teachers collaborate, share ideas, and support one another. Compensation systems tied to subjective performance measures can unintentionally create competition, resentment, or favoritism rather than teamwork.

In elementary education especially, growth often happens in ways that are difficult to quantify. Some of the most meaningful victories are not reflected in data points: a child speaking confidently for the first time in English, a student finally feeling safe enough to participate, or a struggling learner beginning to believe in themselves. Those moments matter tremendously, yet they are not always captured through evaluation systems tied to compensation.

I also worry deeply about the impact this legislation could have on teacher

morale, recruitment, and retention. Providence already faces challenges attracting and keeping educators. Many teachers are leaving the profession entirely due to burnout, instability, and a growing sense that educators are not trusted or respected. Policies that further reduce protections specifically in Providence risk accelerating that problem.

Students benefit from stable school communities. They benefit when experienced teachers stay in the district long term, mentor newer educators, and build strong relationships with families. Frequent turnover disrupts instruction, weakens school culture, and affects student learning outcomes. The children in Providence deserve consistency just as much as students anywhere else in Rhode Island.

As someone who works directly with young children every day, I can say with certainty that students notice instability. They notice when trusted adults leave. They notice stress within school environments. They thrive when schools are staffed by educators who feel supported, valued, and secure enough to focus fully on teaching and relationships rather than uncertainty about their future.

I entered this profession because I believe public education changes lives. I believe every child deserves educators who are committed to their growth academically, socially, and emotionally. I also believe teachers deserve fair treatment and professional protections regardless of the district in which they work.

Providence educators should not continue to operate under separate rules indefinitely. If the goal is truly to strengthen Providence schools, then the focus should be on collaboration, investment, support, and stability—not policies that weaken protections and create further uncertainty for the people working directly with students every day.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Education Committee to oppose S2934.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to Rhode Island's students and public schools.

Sincerely,

Sydney White