

**To: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Finance**

**From: Fabiola From: Fabiola Burns], cranston/ Providence], Member of Parents Leading for Educational Equity**

**Re: Testimony in Strong Support for S-3015 (Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act)**

**Dear Chairman DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of **S-3015, the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act**. As a parent and a member of Parents Leading for Educational Equity, I am writing to urge you to pass this critical legislation.

S-3015 would replace an outdated, inequitable funding formula with a needs-based, transparent system that directs resources where students actually need them. Our current education funding formula is broken. It is failing our children by creating a two-tiered system where a student's opportunities are determined by their zip code's property values, not their potential. S-3015 corrects this fundamental injustice by creating a single, fair, and transparent system that directs resources based on the real, documented needs of students.

My support for this bill is driven by the direct, positive, and long-overdue impact it will have on our most vulnerable children across the state. Specifically, this act provides targeted, meaningful solutions for several critical groups:

1. **Our Youngest Learners in Preschool and Early Education:** This bill recognizes that the foundation for success is built long before kindergarten. It provides stable, dedicated funding for public preschool programs, ensuring more children have access to high-quality early learning. Crucially, it also addresses the significant costs associated with preschool special education, a vital service for three- and four-year-olds with developmental delays. This investment helps close achievement gaps before they widen and ensures our most vulnerable toddlers and preschoolers get the support they need to start school ready to learn.
2. **Students from Low-Income Families:** For the thousands of children in Rhode Island from low-income households, this bill is a lifeline. By focusing on the concentration of poverty, it provides funding for essential resources such as social workers, academic interventionists, and after-school programs. It ensures that every child has an equitable chance, regardless of their family's economic situation.
3. **Multilingual Learners (MLLs):** Our urban core districts educate over 11,000 MLLs, a task that requires immense and specialized resources. S-3015 recognizes this as a statewide responsibility and provides dedicated funding necessary for these students to thrive, including tiered weights based on English proficiency. This means more qualified

ESL staff, proven bilingual education models, and the support MLLs need to achieve academic fluency.

4. **Children with Complex Healthcare Needs and Special Education:** This act ensures that Rhode Island meets its legal and moral obligation to our differently-abled students. Providence alone serves 4,700 students with legally mandated special education services. S-3015 provides the necessary resources for districts to hire specialists and create inclusive, supportive learning environments by ensuring all students receiving services are adequately funded.

#### Additional Reasons for Support

- **Equity Statewide:** This bill helps urban, working-class, rural, and suburban communities by allocating funds according to documented student needs rather than property wealth, providing relief to overburdened districts and fairer tax outcomes for homeowners.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** The proposed structure creates clearer reporting and accountability through a new **Fiscal Responsibility Advisory Board**, so the public and policymakers can track whether funds reach students and improve outcomes.

For the future of all our children—from our earliest learners in preschool to those from low-income families, multilingual backgrounds, and with complex health or special education needs—this bill provides a lifeline to our urban core, critical support to working-class and rural towns, and property tax relief for communities unjustly burdened by the current system.

I respectfully ask the **Committee on Finance to support the Education Equity Act S-3015.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



**Name Fabiola Burns**

Providence/RI

Parents Leading for Educational Equity