

Good afternoon members of the Senate Finance Committee

My name is Andrea Gonzalez, and I am a Program Manager at Young Voices, as well as an alumni of Providence Public Schools. I want to express my strong support for bill S3015 which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. This would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island. At Young Voices recognize this as a generational opportunity to adequately and equitably create better pay for teachers, revitalize our crumbling infrastructure, and require greater transparency for all school districts.

School is a place where every student, regardless of their household income or area code, should feel safe, challenged, and loved. Yet all of us at Young Voices understand that right now, our resources are not being fairly managed by the state. The areas with the highest need are often the most insufficiently funded, the schools most lacking in accountability measures are also the most opaque in their reporting, and out-of-school-time programs are at constant risk of being cut, while more and more resources are channeled into wealthy private schools and affluent neighborhoods year after year. This imbalance cannot be allowed to continue.

The proposed legislation offers a path forward. It is built on a comprehensive set of recommendations that focus on accounting for the full cost of education and sharing those costs more equitably, tailoring instructional costs directly to what students need, increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities, and requiring accountability measures that tie spending to educational outcomes. From renovating old buildings, fixing leaky ceilings, and ensuring that our classrooms are safe, this new funding formula ensures that we can focus on our education, not just our safety.

We hope that the members of the Finance Committee will make the correct decision and vote YES to advance S3015 today. Thank you for your time and attention.

Andrea

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Deborah Paul, I am a 10th grader at Classical High School and a youth at Young Voices, an afterschool program in Providence, RI. I am writing today in support of S3015 which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. This would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island.

This bill is really important to me because I see the lack of funding and how much it impacts the things that we get to do at my school. Although many people don't consider fieldtrips and outside events to be important, they are highlights to our education and make schools a more enjoyable and diverse learning environment. Unfortunately, we constantly miss out on opportunities to grow more in our learning because there isn't enough funding for us to do so. Even when we do have special occasions, we have to buy our own food, and pay for entry. This makes it inaccessible to many students. More funding will make schools a more equitable place for everyone.

We need to pass this bill because I want my learning experience to be fun and enriching. I don't want to worry about the finances of my school, and how I am missing out on my education because of it.

Voting yes for this bill will not just make kids' time in high school more enjoyable but it will also make schools better overall. From renovating old buildings, fixing leaky ceilings, and ensuring that classrooms are safe, more funding ensures that we can focus on our education, and not our safety. Please help us improve our schools by passing bill S3015.

Thank you for your time,

Deborah Paul

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Jamayra Hernandez, I am a 10th grader at Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School and a youth at Young Voices, an afterschool program in Providence, RI. I am writing today in support of S3015 which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. This would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island. This would give support for special education, school maintenance, money for our CTE programs, school supplies and more programs.

This bill is really important to me because I'm in the health care CTE program. Knowing how impactful funding is to make sure that we all get access to the materials that we deserve, I constantly worry that I won't have what I need to learn all of the skills I need to have a successful career. Our classrooms lack support, because we are losing teachers left and right. Many of them quit because of lack of funding, they can't afford to continue buying materials for all of their students that should be covered by the schools. They have low pay, but also have to cover where the school lacks.

We need to pass this bill because it will help our education, make school a better and more enjoyable environment, and will give us more opportunities to thrive. Please help us make school better for all students by passing bill S3015.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Jamayra Hernandez

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Alexandra Paredes, I am a 10th grader at Village Green Virtual Charter School and a youth at Young Voices, an afterschool program in Providence, RI. I am writing today in support of S3015 which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. This would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island.

This bill is really important to me because public schools need money for food and basic necessities to support all of their students. School supplies such as books, pencils, paper, printers, projectors, are all essential for students to have the education we deserve. Teacher and staff pay, school events and opportunities are also really important to maintain a good and growing school environment where students feel ready to learn.

We need to pass this bill because it allows for teachers and staff to earn better pay, which improves our experiences in class and reduces burnout for them. It allows for better class supplies and more technology which helps give students more exposure to the modern world we now live in. Getting more funding will also lead the students to get more opportunities with events made with the money, and chances to go out and learn more.

I believe that this bill should be passed for all the people that will be affected positively by it. Please help us improve the funding for schools by passing S3015.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Paredes

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Phoebe Gardea, I am a 10th grader at Classical High School and a youth at Young Voices, an afterschool program in Providence, RI. I am writing today in support of S3015 which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. This would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island.

This bill is really important to me because I have first hand experience with the terrible maintenance in schools. At my middle school, there was a school leak that flooded the entire basement and first floor. There has also been water leaking from the roof at my high school and every time it rains, it leaks onto the floor. There have also been fires, roof falling, and gas leaks all in the span of a year. More funding is needed to fix all of these issues and ensure that we can focus on learning and not trying to stay safe in school.

We need to pass this bill because these are health hazards to my peers, teachers, and administrators. This is a major topic in my school and students are consistently complaining about the unkept conditions of our schools. It creates unsafe environments and limits our learning. With appropriate funding, we can see school be a place where we don't complain about the safety, but rather enjoy the opportunities given to us.

Please vote on bill S3015 in order to create a safe and well kept environment for students.

Thank you for your time.

Phoebe Gardea



To: Senate Finance Committee

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee

The youth of Young Voices wish to express their strong support of S3015, which would establish the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act. We recognize this as a generational opportunity to adequately and equitably create better pay for teachers, revitalize our crumbling infrastructure, and require greater transparency for all school districts.

School is a place where every student, regardless of their household income or area code, should feel safe, challenged, and loved. Yet all of us at Young Voices understand that right now, our resources are not being fairly managed by the state. The areas with the highest need are often the most insufficiently funded, the schools most lacking in accountability measures are also the most opaque in their reporting, and out-of-school-time programs are at constant risk of being cut, while more and more resources are channeled into wealthy private schools and affluent neighborhoods year after year. This imbalance cannot be allowed to continue.

The proposed legislation offers a path forward. It is built on a comprehensive set of recommendations that focus on accounting for the full cost of education and sharing those costs more equitably, tailoring instructional costs directly to what students need, increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities, and requiring accountability measures that tie spending to educational outcomes. From renovating old buildings, fixing leaky ceilings, and ensuring that our classrooms are safe, this new funding formula ensures that we can focus on our education, not just our safety.

We hope that the members of the Finance Committee will make the correct decision and vote YES to advance S3015 today. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

The Youth of Young Voices