



CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS
MAYOR MARIA RIVERA

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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Rhode Island Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: Support for H8429 and S3214 - Central Falls Schools to Local Control

Dear Chairman Abney, Chairman DiPalma, and Honorable Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

On behalf of the City of Central Falls, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of H8429 and S3214, which would return the Central Falls School District to local governance effective July 1, 2026. I am also submitting the Central Falls City Council resolution supporting this legislation as well as the Final Report of the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance, which unanimously recommended this legislation.

This legislation is the product of years of planning, community engagement, and responsible fiscal analysis. For more than three decades, Central Falls has lived under a school governance structure unlike that of any ordinary Rhode Island municipality. That structure may have reflected the circumstances of an earlier period, but the record before these Committees now shows that Central Falls is prepared to take the next step: local governance paired with continued state partnership, fiscal transparency, and accountability for student outcomes.

The Commission Final Report is especially important because it does not recommend a symbolic or unsupported transfer of responsibility. It recommends a structured transition. The Report recognizes that the City has made significant progress since its bankruptcy proceeding, that Central Falls has established and begun training a new local school board, that there is strong community support for returning governance to the City, and that the City has developed an operational transition plan. The Report also candidly recognizes the City's limited fiscal capacity and the need for a sustainable

funding framework that protects students while allowing Central Falls to responsibly increase its local contribution over time.

H8429 and S3214 implement that balanced approach. The bills repeal R.I. Gen. Laws Section 16-2-34, the statute that created the state-appointed Central Falls School District board of trustees, and establish the framework necessary for a July 1, 2026 return to local control. They also provide for reforms to the Central Falls Stabilization Fund, recognize costs outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula, require an annual City contribution, incorporate a responsible use of school district fund balance, and preserve continued state support and review. The legislation therefore aligns local democratic accountability with a practical, transparent fiscal pathway.

Our City is prepared to accept the obligations that come with local governance: public accountability, annual financial participation, transparent reporting, cooperation with RIDE, and shared responsibility for the long-term strength of the school district. What the City seeks is the same fundamental principle available to other communities: that the people of Central Falls should have a direct and meaningful role in the governance of their public schools.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation to the City of Central Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', followed by a wavy line.

Maria Rivera
Mayor

Cc: Honorable Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees

Enclosures