



April 28, 2026

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

RE: SENATE BILL 3214 - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Committee Members,

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns respectfully submits testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 3214, which makes important revisions to the governance structure of the Central Falls School District and updates provisions related to the Central Falls Stabilization Fund within the state's education funding framework. The League views this legislation as a thoughtful and balanced step forward that supports students, protects taxpayers, and promotes long-term fiscal and operational stability for the City of Central Falls.

As a proud participant in the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance, I was honored to represent the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns throughout this important process. From the outset, the Commission's charge centered on two core objectives: developing a sustainable financial pathway and timeline for the City of Central Falls to assume its local share of foundation education aid and creating a comprehensive plan for the orderly transition of operational and fiscal responsibility back to the local level. These directives went directly to the heart of the work before us, ensuring that any transition to local governance would be grounded in fiscal sustainability, transparency, and clear accountability, while also protecting students and respecting taxpayers.

Senate Bill 3214 reflects the substance of that collaborative work and advances a measured and responsible framework for implementation. Importantly, the legislation establishes a phased municipal contribution beginning in FY2027 while maintaining continued state support through the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. It also includes a future review mechanism to assess the funding structure as the transition progresses, reinforcing accountability and ensuring long-term fiscal predictability and sustainability. The League believes this approach appropriately balances ambition with practicality, ensuring the City is positioned for success without compromising stability.

With respect to governance, the League recognizes the intent of the legislation to modernize the statutory framework governing the Central Falls School District by repealing § 16-2-34 and aligning the district more closely with current statewide education governance structures. Central Falls has long operated under a unique governance model, and this bill thoughtfully moves toward greater local responsibility while maintaining appropriate oversight during the transition period. Clarifying the respective roles of the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Education, and local leadership is essential to preserving continuity and ensuring stability for students, families, and educators.

The League also strongly supports the provisions updating the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. These revisions reaffirm the shared responsibility between the state and the City of Central Falls in financing critical district obligations that fall outside the core foundation education aid formula. The stabilization framework continues to ensure predictable funding for essential, non-discretionary costs, including transportation, facility-related expenses, retiree obligations, tuition for outplaced special education students, and other required placements. These services are fundamental to meeting student needs and require reliable and sustained support.

The League further recognizes the importance of maintaining fiscal stability for Central Falls in light of its limited local tax capacity. The stabilization fund structure continues to reflect a balanced and equitable partnership between the state and municipality, ensuring that students are not adversely affected by structural fiscal constraints beyond the city's control. As this transition moves forward, continued collaboration between state and local partners will be essential to maintaining both financial stability and educational continuity.

In closing, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns supports Senate Bill 3214 as a responsible and well-considered measure that advances the goals established by the Commission while preserving both educational and fiscal stability for Central Falls.

We respectfully appreciate the opportunity to present our perspective on this important legislation and thank the members of the Committee for their consideration. The League remains committed to working with the General Assembly to strengthen public education systems across all Rhode Island communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Finance Committee