

**Lisa Cataldi**

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**From:** Emma Hookway <emma.hookway@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 24, 2024 10:54 AM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Cc:** David Neves  
**Subject:** RI Schools need H-7020 PLEASE SUPPORT  
**Attachments:** Support House Bill H-7020.pdf

To all members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Emma Marshall. I am a music teacher at Joseph H. Gaudet Middle School and the Gaudet Learning Academy in Middletown, RI, where I teach elementary and middle school general music, beginning band, and Chorus for grades 5-8. I am also currently serving as the Immediate Past President of the Rhode Island Music Education Association. I am writing in ardent support of House Bill H-7020-Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act.

We desperately need accountability and support for our music programs. We need a voice at the table with the RI Department of Education in the form of an Arts Curriculum Coordinator. We need to hold every district in Rhode Island accountable for offering high-quality opportunities for music and arts proficiency. I stress true PROFICIENCY; not just experiential programs. House Bill H-7020-Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act is an important step in the right direction to accomplish this goal.

Please see the attached PDF as public testimony in further support of House Bill H-7020.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,  
Emma Marshall  
Music Teacher, Middletown Public Schools  
RIMEA Immediate Past President

To the members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Emma Marshall. I am a music teacher at Joseph H. Gaudet Middle School and the Gaudet Learning Academy in Middletown, RI, where I teach elementary and middle school general music, beginning band, and Chorus for grades 5-8. I am also currently serving as the Immediate Past President of the Rhode Island Music Education Association. I am writing in ardent support of House Bill H-7020-Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act.

I have been teaching music in Middletown Public Schools for 15 years. During that time, when we were at our most robust, we had 2 full-time music teachers at the high school and 3 at the middle school. Our course offerings during this era included:

Middletown High School	Gaudet Middle School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Band</li><li>• Chorus</li><li>• Jazz Band</li><li>• Select Choir</li><li>• Guitar I &amp; II</li><li>• Piano I &amp; II</li><li>• Music Theory</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Band 5, 6, 7 &amp; 8</li><li>• Chorus 5, 6, 7 &amp; 8</li><li>• Select Choir</li><li>• Jazz Band</li><li>• General Music</li></ul>

Now, in this post- COVID era of education, in which funding has been in steady decline for years, we have suffered great losses as a music department. We are down to 1 full-time teacher at the high school level and 1.5 at the middle school level. As a natural result, music course offerings for our Middletown students have greatly decreased (highlighted courses no longer exist) as has the quality of instruction for the courses that remain. One such example is that at the middle school level, we were once able to support each ensemble class with 2-3 teachers. In doing so, we were able to achieve best-practice strategies like homogenous instrument groupings for band classes and smaller group instruction/sectional practices for all other large ensemble classes, which at their highest enrollment boasted upwards of 80 students per ensemble. Now we have 1 teacher per ensemble. Small group instruction is all but impossible due to scheduling and space limitations.

At the high school level, one of our greatest challenges is scheduling. Students' schedules are severely impacted by the requirements of CTE and Pathways Programs as well as by the expanded credit requirements for all students in Math, World Language and other "traditional academics" found in the updated graduation regulations. Many students who want to enroll in music courses are unable to do so because they do not have room in their course schedules. Enrollment in the few classes we have left to offer at the high school level have dropped dramatically in recent years. Band and Chorus, the two largest ensemble classes at the high school once boasted 50+ and 70+ students respectively. This year their numbers are in the 20s and teens respectively. As a result, our admin has found it all too easy to cut music classes that show low enrollment and thereby justify cutting staff requirements as well, thus creating a seemingly self-fulfilling prophecy.

We desperately need accountability and support for our music programs. We need a voice at the table with the RI Department of Education in the form of an Arts Curriculum Coordinator. We need to hold every district in Rhode Island accountable for offering high-quality opportunities for music and arts proficiency. I stress true PROFICIENCY; not just experiential programs. House Bill H-7020-Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act is an important step in the right direction to accomplish this goal.

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Sincerely,  
Emma Marshall  
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