



**WARWICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
Shaun Galligan, Chair

January 19, 2025

H 5252

Honorable Warwick City Council  
Municipal Annex  
65 Centerville Road  
Warwick, RI 02886

**Subject:** Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission

Honorable Members of Warwick City Council,

We are writing to express our respectful opposition to the resolution proposing a special legislative request to create a *Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission*.

While we acknowledge the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency, we believe that this resolution is not the most effective or appropriate means to achieve these goals. We do, however, remain open to additional measures that would enhance fiscal oversight, increase transparency, and build public confidence among all stakeholders, including taxpayers and state fiscal agencies.

Our concern lies in the potential impact of such a commission on the governance and autonomy of Warwick Public Schools. We understand that the school department's current fiscal position may raise concerns about potential implications for bond ratings or future tax increases.

However, the Warwick School Committee has already demonstrated a proactive commitment to addressing these concerns by contracting independent consultants with decades of municipal finance experience, and increased communication with the Mayor's office and Council. Furthermore, we have begun to construct fiscal plans for FY26 through FY30; these plans will be transformative for our school district.

Recently, we have taken deliberate steps to mitigate the risk of adverse financial projections materializing, to include freezing of discretionary spending, and line-item reductions. We are planning for additional line-item reductions, both staffing and non-staffing related. We remain steadfast in our efforts to ensure sound fiscal management.

69 Draper Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island 02889

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Should the City and Council determine that special legislation related to a budget commission is necessary, we strongly urge the consideration of utilizing the already established state legislation governing state budget commissions. This approach would ensure consistency with existing frameworks while providing the necessary oversight and support to address fiscal challenges.

In conclusion, while we oppose the resolution to establish a Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission, we remain committed to working collaboratively with the City Council and other stakeholders to ensure fiscal accountability and transparency. We are confident that, through continued dialogue and cooperative efforts, we can achieve these shared goals without compromising the autonomy and effectiveness of our public schools.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing our partnership in service to the Warwick community.

Respectfully,

Shaun Galligan, Chairman

Leah Hazelwood, Vice Chairwoman

Michelle Kirby-Chapman, Clerk

David Testa, City-Wide Representative

Sean Wiggins, City-Wide Representative

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Furthermore, we have carefully considered the concerns raised by the Mayor, his Administration, the Council President, and members of the Council. We believe that the proposed actions outlined in the accompanying table address these concerns comprehensively and effectively. These actions reflect a collaborative and transparent approach to fiscal oversight, ensuring that all stakeholders have confidence in the governance of our public schools.

Prior to the distribution of this letter, Superintendent Dambruch confirmed her support of the actions below.

Action	Frequency	Expiration	Action Category
Meeting with the Mayor, City Administration, SC Chair, and WPS Administration, to discuss WPS matters, to include financial performance.	Bi-weekly	Ongoing	Existing
Meeting with Council President, Council Finance Sub-Committee Chair, and other Council designees, to discuss WPS matters, including financial performance.	Bi-Weekly	Ongoing	Existing
Meeting with the Mayor's Administration, Council designees, and contracted financial consultants, to evaluate financial performance, forecasts, and suggested administrative practices.	Bi-Weekly	Until 5-year plan is approved by Auditor General	New
Superintendent, WPS Finance Director, and School Committee designee to appear before Council Finance Sub-Committee to discuss expenditures and fiscal health.	Monthly	Ongoing	New
Create a corrective action plan and submit it to the Auditor General.	Weekly	No later than February 28, 2025	New
Construct a 5-year plan and present publicly before the City Council.	Once per Year	No later than February 28, 2025	New

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