

April 8, 2025

Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Committee on Education  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Opposition to H5840**

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to H5840.

This bill would require that all independent or district charter schools include a union neutrality clause in their charter when applying for renewal or seeking to establish a new school. This proposed mandate raises significant concerns regarding free speech and the operational autonomy of public charter schools.

Furthermore, this bill prohibits school leaders from expressing any viewpoint regarding unionization—including positive, neutral, and factual statements. This restriction impedes on the ability for school administrators to share important information with staff.

Rhode Island already maintains strong labor protections, and there is no documented evidence of charter schools interfering with union organizing efforts. As such, this legislation appears to be a solution in search of a problem.

Parents choose charter schools because of their ability to adapt, hire strategically, and cultivate mission-driven school cultures. By imposing additional compliance burdens, this bill weakens the very autonomy that families rely on when selecting a charter option.

At a time when our schools are grappling with urgent issues—staffing challenges, student achievement gaps, and school safety—H5840 diverts attention and resources away from where they are most needed.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject H5840 and instead prioritize policies that support open communication, informed decision-making, and educational stability across all public school settings.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Victor F. Capellan