



East Providence School Department

1998 PAWTUCKET AVENUE
EAST PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02914



SANDRA J. FORAND, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

CELESTE BOWLER, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

May 20, 2024

Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney,

My name is Sandra Forand and I am the Superintendent of Schools for the East Providence School District. I am writing in support of House Bill 8179-Residence of Children for School Purposes.

Bradley CRAFT Program is a residential inpatient treatment facility located in East Providence that services students throughout the state, regardless of their district of origin. Parents choose to place a child at CRAFT due to behavior and mental health needs. CRAFT placements are not DCYF placements, although there is an occasional student who is in DCYF care. CRAFT is a one-of-a-kind program in Rhode Island because there is no educational facility attached. Other therapeutic residential programs have educational services and the clients admitted remain the responsibility of the resident district of origin. Medical insurance pays for the CRAFT therapeutic services children receive outside of the school day, but East Providence is charged for the educational services because of its location in East Providence.

Under current statute, parents are required to register in East Providence and East Providence is responsible for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). By placing children who enter CRAFT in the district, we feel it compromises the educational stability of the child. Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are enrolled in special education in the district and families are forced, for the duration of the stay at CRAFT, to change IEP teams to the East Providence team. Our staff does not have any working knowledge of the students' academic and social emotional needs, yet are charged with making educational decisions for these children.

CRAFT has a rolling admissions process so students change schools at any given time during the school year, only to return to their home district upon discharge. Placement typically lasts up to one year. Some districts prefer to stay connected to their student, who will inevitably return to the district of residence, while other districts step away from the student for the duration of their admission, upsetting educational stability and leaving decisions and recommendations to East Providence. This creates constant demands on the East Providence special services staff and programs, including special education teachers, related service providers, transportation and administrative staff. It also makes it difficult to budget because we cannot anticipate how many outside tuition charges we will be responsible to pay.

Currently, the district receives \$26,000 per bed in state aid with a total of 18 beds. Since 2016, East Providence has enrolled 250 CRAFT students. 96% of the children admitted to CRAFT since 2016 were not East Providence residents. Of the 250 students, the district has funded at least 53 out of district placements. In addition, 73% of the enrolled CRAFT students have had IEPs and at least 8% have had 504 plans.

During the current school year, only one of the 18 students at CRAFT was an East Providence resident. Eight of the students were out of district IEPs that East Providence is required to fund. There have been 13 special education students and 5 general education students year-to-date. The average Out of District Tuition is \$75,500 and the average cost per student for transportation is \$16,500 annually, all of which East Providence School Department is responsible for and only receives \$26,000 in state aid per student. The additional money above state aid comes out of the general school department budget.

Below is a breakdown of costs to the East Providence School District since 2016. The average annual cost to East Providence is \$393,803.63 above state aid. These costs continue to rise as out of district tuition and transportation increase each year.

		Average Cost to District Since 2016
Average per pupil cost for in district pupils	\$15,747.77	X 200 students receiving services in district since 2016 = \$3,149,555.56/9 years \$349,959.62 average per year since 2016
Average Out of District Tuition Cost	\$75,500	X 50 students serviced since 2016 = \$3,775,000/9 years \$419,444 average out of district cost per year since 2016 \$93,000 in transportation costs per year
TOTAL ESTIMATED AVERAGE ANNUAL OUT OF DISTRICT		\$511,844.00 total average since 2016 for out of district schooling
TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL AVERAGE SPENDING FOR CRAFT STUDENTS	(250 students since 2016)	\$861,803.63 average cost to district since 2016 18 beds X \$26,000 = \$468,000 in state aid to district for CRAFT
TOTAL STATE AID:		
TOTAL AVERAGE COST PER YEAR TO DISTRICT.		\$393,803.63 (AVERAGE EAST PROVIDENCE CONTRIBUTION ABOVE STATE AID SINCE 2016)

*The chart above shows the average spending per year above state aid to support the CRAFT Program. This money comes out of the East Providence School Department general budget.

Chairman Marvin L. Abney
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The East Providence School District is requesting that students remain the responsibility of their District of Origin. We feel it is in the child's best interest educationally. It would also relieve the East Providence School District of the financial stress and unpredictability of the current legislation. Thank you for your consideration. We would greatly appreciate your support for H8179.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandra J. Forand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandra J. Forand, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SJF:slc