

*Donna Huntley-Newby PhD., RN
18 Larch Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906*

April 2, 2025

To: Members of the House Finance Committee

I am writing in strong opposition to 2025 – H5389. As a concerned member of the community and education advocate, I believe this bill will have a detrimental impact on the Providence Public School System and the well-being of our students and future leaders of Rhode Island. This action will reward the immoral and inexcusable behavior of the City of Providence related to underfunding and withholding financial resources for their students. Any political leader who supports this bill can NOT credibly say that they support quality public education.

The experience of the City of Providence related to education funding is directly related to their priority of focusing on the needs of adults and special interest groups instead of our children. If the City does not have the best interest related to education of our children why are you trying to remove the individual who has their educational interest and who will obtain the funding to insure their education? The experience and political rhetoric of Providence is not the experience of other districts who value education and future leaders. Removing the authority of the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to withhold funds from a debtor community leaves **NO** incentive to provide appropriate funding for school districts.

The legislative process this past fall was utilized by the present administration to withhold past and present funding to deny the opportunity to provide the resources needed for the education of our future leaders. This administration even utilized the court system to deny the funding for our schools, but the school system prevailed. Now, you and your colleagues have presented legislation to decrease the authority of the commissioner to obtain the appropriate resources for our students. We also have a new school board who are in the process of onboarding, several who are new to school governance and educational outcomes. It is very clear that little has changed under the City of Providence related to the political games being played by our leaders. Is it too much to ask that we have appropriate financial resources for our children and allow the commissioner to exercise their authority related to funding?

Let's not repeat our past mistakes related to our children's education and provide them a quality curriculum, state of the art buildings and resources to become our next leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Huntley-Newby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donna Huntley-Newby PhD., RN
Chair
District Wide Advisory Committee