



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ^{AFT}_{AFL-CIO}

To: House Finance Committee
From: James Parisi, Field Representative
Date: April 2, 2025

Re: **State School Takeover- Fiscal Authority**

Testimony in **Opposition** to 2025-H 5389 (Representative Slater, et. al.)

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals opposes H 5389. The bill would amend the funding of schools under state control and make any funding increase based on a percentage of local tax increase, irrespective of the needs of the students in the district. The bill eliminates the only known enforcement mechanism on the maintenance of effort when a district is under state takeover. Finally, the bill requires the Revenue Director to appoint a fiscal overseer with significant authority.

Across the country, schools that are taken over by the state have historically been underfunded schools located in municipalities with a myriad of fiscal challenges. Lack of resources is a primary problem to be solved in addressing lack of student success on assessments. Limiting any funding increase will lead to worse education outcomes and should not be enacted.

The RIFTHP is concerned with the elimination of the existing local funding enforcement mechanism without the creation a new enforcement mechanism. If withholding education aid is not the preferred enforcement mechanism when local communities fail to meet their financial obligation, we ask the Assembly to create an alternative enforcement mechanism.

We do not object to the appointment of a fiscal overseer but are concerned about creating another level of bureaucracy, which was a primary reason the state took over Providence Public Schools.

Finally, the RIFTHP is working on legislation, (H 5594 by Representative DeSimone), to limit future state takeovers to individual schools instead of entire school districts. We believe there is a widely held view that the state takeover of Providence Schools has been a failure. We hope to avoid future state takeovers that fail to deliver improvement for students, teachers, and school staff. Should you enact legislation to prevent future state takeovers of entire school districts, H 5389 would not be needed because the Providence school district takeover would be the last state takeover of an entire school district in Rhode Island.

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