



To: House Committee on Education  
From: Erich Haslehurst, National Education Association Rhode Island  
Date: February 25, 2025  
Re: H5337 – RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COOPERATIVE SERVICE AMONG SCHOOL DISTRICTS--CHARTER SCHOOL REFORM

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island and our 12,000 members to express our strong opposition to H5337, introduced by Representative Place, for several reasons.

First and foremost, we are deeply concerned about the uncertainty surrounding education funding that may come to Rhode Island from the US Department of Education. With the current administration discussing the dismantling of the institution, it is crucial that we focus on finding ways to continue providing quality education to our children in public schools and ensuring they receive the necessary services. Proposals that divert funding away from public schools and towards charter schools are not in the best interest of our students.

Additionally, the vague language used in sections a and b, referring to "non-traditional approaches," is troubling. It is essential that educational criteria outlined in legislation are clear and specific to ensure the best outcomes for our students.

Of particular concern is the provision in new section h, which would allow a charter school – whose charter has not been renewed – to transfer their allotted seats to another school offering a non-traditional approach. This circumvents the established system in Rhode Island for charters and mayoral academies and is a way to further expand charters without having any safeguards in place.

Furthermore, the proposed changes in 16-77-13 would enable communities to opt out of the public education system in favor of charter schools, which would have a detrimental impact on both the communities and the students they serve. Now is not the time to undermine our public schools; rather, we should be prioritizing their success and ensuring adequate funding for them. For these reasons, NEARI strongly opposes this legislation.

Sincerely,

Erich Haslehurst  
National Education Association Rhode Island