



November 2, 2015

Dear Chairman Sweitzer,

Congratulations on your appointment to the education funding formula working group. Rhode Island Mayoral Academies (RIMA) is eager to contribute to this important process of understanding what is working and what can be improved upon.

To help inform the discussion, we are sending information about mayoral academies and RI charter schools. As you may be aware, a mayoral academy is a high-quality, diverse public charter school that is regional (enrolling from both urban and suburban districts) and has a board led by a mayor or elected town administrator of a sending community. Our mayoral academies include Blackstone Valley Prep, RISE Prep, and Achievement First Providence.

- **Rhode Island charter schools are open access, free, and serve all students within their enrollment boundaries** (some statewide, regional, or city-specific). As long as seats are available, *all* students that enroll are accepted.
- **Rhode Island public charter schools serve disproportionately more students of color from low-income backgrounds**, as evidenced by the latest publically available RIDE data.
  - 72% of charter school students are low-income eligible for free reduced lunch compared to 49% statewide.
  - 75% of the charter school students identify as students of color compared to 40% statewide.
- **Rhode Island public charter schools serve more English language learners**, 11% as compared to 7% statewide.
- **RI public charters serve special education students with 14% of the student population identified as such** (slightly less than the 16% statewide). Though RI charters are working to ensure all SPED students are aware of charters as options, charters also work hard not to over-identify SPED students to the detriment of the students.
- **Rhode Island public charter schools are held to a high degree of accountability**, including all state and federal academic standards as well as health and safety regulations, open meetings, and freedom of information mandates. Charters schools have the additional requirement of having their charters evaluated by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education every five years for renewal or closure.

Thank you for your service to ensure the formula remains equitable for all public school children. Our office is available in any way you may find helpful in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

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