



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT  
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**Public Comment Re: Oversight of Providence Public Schools  
Senate Oversight Committee  
February 28, 2022  
Paige Clausius-Parks, Senior Policy Analyst**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

For 27 years Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has published the *Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* which provides a statistical portrait of Rhode Island's children. Year after year data has shown poor outcomes for children in Providence Public Schools including being among the state's lowest reading, math, and SAT scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates and one of the state's highest rates of chronic absenteeism and number of schools identified for intervention. **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to turn around Providence Public Schools.**

I was honored to serve as Co-Chair of the Community Design Team (CDT). Developing the CDT recommendations and providing guidance for the Turnaround Action Plan was incredibly hard work, but implementation is the most challenging phase of policy and transformation. Implementation is both an art and a science that requires mastery of mission-focused content and flexible people-centered processes. The implementation of the Providence Turnaround Action Plan has been met with many challenges; however, we cannot let these challenges impede progress.

We are encouraged by the 2021 *SurveyWorks* results:

- Seventy-six percent of Providence Public School students in grades 3-5 and 65% students in grades 6-12 report that their **teachers take time to make sure they understand the material**, an increase of four and 13 percentage points respectively from the Spring 2020.
- Eighty-five percent of Providence Public School students in grades 3-5 and 77% of students in grades 6-12 report their **teachers are respectful towards them**, an increase of three and 13 percentage points, respectively.
- Seventy-nine percent of Providence Public School students in grades 3-5 and 55% percent of students in grades 6-12 report their **teachers seem excited to be teaching their classes**, an increase of 10 and 14 percentage points, respectively.

Other signs of positive progress include the adoption of a **unified high-quality K-8 curriculum**, creation of the **rapid response tool for families**, launching of the **dual language middle school program** at Gilbert Stuart Middle School and expansion of the dual language program at Spaziano Elementary School, and **teacher engagement in Parent Teacher Conferences**. All these accomplishments were key recommendations authored by the Community Design Team.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is paying close attention to the impact of COVID-19 on chronic absence. During the 2020-2021 school year, **55% of Providence Public School students were chronically absent** meaning that they missed 10% or more of the school year (18 or more days in a 180-day school year). Partnering with students, families, and community partners to develop outreach strategies can help schools re-engage chronically absent students and address lost learning opportunities.

The first three years of the Turnaround Action Plan included priority initiatives that reflect the most common concerns raised by the community and were aligned with the metrics of the PPSD Transformation Scorecard. Priority initiatives for years four and five are designated to be developed in June, 2023. This timeline is approaching, and **we urge the Rhode Island Department of Education to reconvene students, families, educators, and community stakeholders to identify the initiatives for the final stage of the Turnaround Action Plan which should include a strong and comprehensive plan for responsibly returning the school district to community governance and control.**

Now is the time to double-down on the commitment to recreate Providence Public Schools. Our students and families are trusting each of us to get this right, to transform the district, and to create an equitable high-quality education system. Thank you for your commitment to Providence students and families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

February 25, 2022

Honorable Members of the Senate Oversight Committee &  
Chair, Senator Louis DiPalma,

Unfortunately, since I submitted written testimony before the last hearing regarding the Rhode Island Department of Education takeover of the Providence School Department, things have **continued to deteriorate for our students, families and teachers**. While I can only speak to the goings on at my school, Gilbert Stuart Middle School, I am aware of many worrisome issues that are happening at other schools throughout the district.

I would like to make you aware of the following issues that are currently occurring at Gilbert Stuart, which are reflective of what is happening across the district:

**Building Conditions** The school continues to be unhealthy and unsafe for students, teachers and staff employed there for the following reasons:

- **Covid mitigation strategies have been implemented with complete chaos** with inaccurate recording of students and staff who have tested positive or negative and thus are sent home or not sent home when they test(ed) positive, students coded incorrectly in our student management system regarding their **attendance**, collection of permission slips on who should be tested not accurately recorded, **no administrative oversight** of the process for testing, testing not happening on scheduled days, students lined up in hallways with no social distancing or monitoring waiting to be tested, oversight of testing left up to CNAs, inconsistent messages given to parents, students and teachers as to when students should return to school following infection or quarantine, no proper cleaning of classrooms where infected teachers and/or students have spent time, early closing of the health office at the end of the school day when teachers who have no planning period need tests, etc. Grievances have been filed, with no scheduled times to try and resolve them.
- **The cleanliness and the deteriorating conditions of the building which are not addressed lead to absenteeism of students and teachers with underlying health conditions such as asthma**. When grievances have been filed on these building condition issues, which the staff considers a lack of equity, they have been ignored. The most recent report on construction and remodeling suggests that Gilbert Stuart will not be touched. This also leads to concerns that as the neighboring Achievement First School continues to expand at the former Fortes/Lima Complex, our school will also be given to them in the near future to build their campus structure, homeless people sleeping near teachers' cars or in crevices at the corners of the building and their bodily waste left in plain sight, etc.
- **Intruders have entered our building on at least three occasions** that the school community has been made aware of, including one incident where the intruder had a weapon. On another of these occasions, when an actual lockdown was announced, it was not handled according to the steps that should be followed. Students who were in

the cafeteria at the time of the lockdown, did not even hear the announcement. The staff has requested the school's safety plan repeatedly and have never received it.

- **Students have set fires in the school.**
- In one day just prior to vacation, there were at least **6 violent fights in one day.**
- The principal's life was threatened by a student on social media.
- When these incidents have occurred or when less serious infractions have been committed, many students who were involved, were being placed on "**Distance Learning**" rather than being suspended. This is what is being coded in our student management system, **affecting student attendance rates** and the instruction that they receive as Providence has **no Distance Learning options** this school year. Attendance records are legal documents that are being manipulated. It leaves people wondering if the low suspension rates are being affected by possible principal bonuses. When this concern has been brought to our Chief of Operations and the Special Advisor, no actions have been taken.
- If students are sent to the Student Affairs Office because of a serious infraction like those described above, they are likely transferred to another middle school. They are not afforded the mental health care or counseling services that are needed that may have led to the situations which they were involved in. If they commit another serious offense upon transfer, they are simply reassigned to another school, and the cycle continues.
- Parents whose children are involved in altercations are summoned to come to the school immediately or they are threatened with the arrest of their child if they do not get to the school within an hour.
- Unhealthy snacks and soda are being sold to our students during lunch and at other times of the school day via vending machines at exorbitant prices. **There is no explanation as to where the money being raised from these sales is going.** While the snacks, such as Takis, Doritos, candy, etc. are far beyond what is allowed by Health and Wellness Regulations provided by the state and the federal government, and the funds raised from them is unaccounted for, the school is littered with bottles, cans and wrappers, especially in stairwells, making the already unsafe stairs, where the treads are no longer existent, slippery and sticky. **Students who cannot afford to buy these unhealthy products are often bullied and taunted as well.** This information has been provided to both administration at the Network, District and State level, no action has been taken to discontinue this action.

### Teaching and Learning

- Funding is being provided for an **MLL/Literacy Coach** at each of the middle schools. The person who currently holds this position at Stuart holds only an initial certification in science and an emergency certificate in ESL. The person is also a principal in training, which takes her away from her responsibilities as a support to teachers to implement the **ARC reading program that the Commissioner purchased which is used as the core content for English Language Arts and Social Studies.**
- The Commissioner often claims that we now have a viable curriculum, However, a purchased reading program is not a substitute for a curriculum. Do parents even know that their children are not being taught the content of Social Studies, and instead are

reading books about certain events in history or different countries in both their English and History classes in grades 6-8?

- Associated with this reading program, teachers are required to collect and report data on students' reading levels/growth every two weeks. This is in addition to other mandated testing which occurs frequently, interrupting instructional time. The reading program's expectations are that it be taught in a 90 minute block to be considered successful. Throughout the middle schools, the teaching periods are only 52 minutes. The instruction required in this smaller time frame is a whole group lesson in reading and in writing, small group instruction, and bi-weekly independent conferencing with students. Ironically, while many bins of books have been provided in classrooms, when students are reading above grade level, there are no books available for them to read as 7th or 8th graders. One bin of above- level books are available for many students in this category at Gilbert Stuart. **Despite the picture that is painted that the majority of our students are functioning below grade level, there are many who this label does not fit, but we are not meeting their needs if we do not have materials to match their potential unless we do it on our own, as most teachers do.**
- Funding is also being provided for a **Math Coach** at each middle school instead of a teacher leader in this subject area. However, at Gilbert Stuart, we were allowed to have both positions. However, rather than supporting new teachers with a new math curriculum, the person who holds the coaching position plans social events for students and sometimes family members and assists the principal with other duties. A newly hired math teacher who never received support from this person, left after just a few weeks.
- **Almost 40% of the faculty at Gilbert Stuart hold emergency certificates in multiple areas.** Students are being taught by uncertified teachers for consecutive years due to the "Staffing Crisis" that has been created due to over 230 resignations, and over 300 consolidations. These individuals are unprepared for the workload that is involved in providing high quality instruction to such a wide variance of performance levels of students in one class. While Stuart students comprise the highest number/percentage of MLLs of all middle schools in the city, only three teachers currently hold the required certificate to provide high quality instruction for them, and one is only scheduled to teach one class. This person is free the rest of the day to support the principal. The teachers who are newly hired and uncredentialed are promised positions by the principal if they show loyalty to her, despite the fact that they have held emergency certificates for multiple years, and RIDE has continued to issue emergency certificates to these individuals .
- **The Dual Language Program, which began this year at Gilbert Stuart for 6th graders, has NO certified teachers,** yet the program will grow to grades 6 and 7 next year. Additionally, students who have no prior experience in Dual Language Programs have been placed in this Multilingual Learner setting, **leaving many of them struggling,** especially the native Spanish speaking students who did not have strong literacy skills in their first language. **No curriculum or materials have been provided for this program.** No support has been provided from the central office administrators who claimed this program would be overflowing with qualified staff and who assured the

faculty that students who were in K-5 Dual Language programs would fill the seats of this new strand at Gilbert Stuart.

- **There are no Tier 3 interventions offered for struggling students other than a handful who get extra reading support. MLLs are not offered this extra reading support** if they need it because they are scheduled to English Language Development classes, which are often considered intervention courses when in fact they are federally mandated core instructional classes for MLLs. **Many long-term MLLs who have been in ESL, Bilingual and Dual Language programs since Kindergarten, but cannot earn the score that is needed on the ACCESS test to be reclassified as exited MLLs since RIDE raised the required cut score. In some cases, these students show proficiency in meeting grade level state content standards and are reading at grade level, but are held in MLL programs for their entire school career.**
- The additional Professional Development days that have been added to the school year **DO NOT provide high quality learning opportunities for teachers to improve their craft in meeting the needs of our children.** These days are not uniformly planned or presented with a common goal, message or target to improve outcomes for our children. At each school, the building leader decides what should take place on each of these days and prior to the start of school. Many of the sessions on these scheduled days are being provided by uncertified, unqualified quasi administrators whose job descriptions do not match what they are being asked to teach and/or present. There is no differentiation of professional development for teachers based on raising their professional qualifications. Again because of the “Staffing Crisis”, many veteran teachers are forced to spend their days in sessions which present material that they have learned and employed for many years with new teachers who are uncredentialed and have literally no experience in educational settings. On the PD day that was held in January, we spent a good portion of the day **rereading literature that was presented by the former superintendent about opportunity gaps.**
- In regard to the *Right to Read Legislation*, **Providence has not unveiled a plan to provide the professional development/coursework that teachers will need to obtain the credential required by this law.** I believe that *LETRS* training is occurring in some elementary schools to a select, limited number of teachers at a cost of \$1,000.00 per participant to earn the required credential. Recently, I was chosen to participate in an **AFT grant-funded program that would dually allow me to earn my literacy credential and then go on to train other teachers.** Just hours before the first day of training, the pool of teachers I was included with to be trained was trimmed from 15 to 5, and following the first two days of training, **the professional days required to complete the training were canceled and denied by the district, again due to the “Staffing Crisis.”**
- **The principal continues to refuse to co-chair the Instructional Leadership Team in the manner in which it is described in the contract and in the district toolkit or the School Improvement Team that is outlined in Rhode Island General Law.** Instead, she makes all decisions void of any stakeholder input. Additionally, **she refuses to meet with Union Faculty Committee members to attempt to resolve concerns and issues at the building level which forces us to file grievances.**

- **The principal refuses to share her budgeting allocations with the Instructional Leadership Team and the School Improvement Team. This is especially concerning as Title I requires participation in decision making around these allocated funds. The school pays 15% of a teacher salary to a faculty member to serve as the School Treasurer, but we have never seen a treasurer's report despite requesting it.**
- **The after school program and the Saturday tutoring program as well as the cafeteria are often left supervised by non-certified adults with little knowledge or experience in managing large numbers of students.**
- **MLLs are being denied full participation in the coursework offered at our school, particularly in the areas of the Arts. Often they are not included in special events at the school and have been left off of the Honor Roll.**

I could continue to go on to list ways that the Takeover and TAP have failed to help us improve or provide any form of accountability in the last two plus years, but I will leave you with the information that is provided here. **I implore you to take action immediately** so that some of these wrongs can be made right **for our children, who are the future of our city and our state.** Many of our parents are afraid to speak up or feel intimidated by a system which they are unfamiliar with as recent immigrants, so as teachers we ARE their voices. Another generation is being robbed of any real improvement, **despite teachers' efforts to collaborate, cooperate, and better meet the needs of our students. We work tirelessly on behalf of our children, but daily face frustration and disrespect from our leadership at all levels.** Our professional experience and knowledge is seen as roadblock, rather than as a support.

I adore and love my students and want as much for them as I want for my own children, but this passion is overlooked and viewed as an obstacle to change. If there are ways I can improve my craft, please let me learn those ways, but do not dismiss me. I read on Twitter a quote that resonates with me that I will leave you with, ***"I love being a teacher, I love my students, but when I pull up to the parking lot of my school, I do not want to get out of the car."*** I feel that this sentiment is reflective of what most Providence Teachers are feeling in regard to this failed TAKEOVER.

**Finally, I urge and request that you please visit some of our schools to see in real time the scenarios I have described.** Please come unannounced so that administrators are not given time to show you a fake rosy picture or promote the falsities that are referenced by the Commissioner and her team of decision makers who have few noteworthy leadership skills or real passion to change, but dictate instead.

Our students, families, teachers and staff NEED you more than ever at this time of turmoil for our children.

Sincerely and Professionally,

Julie A. Motta

Newcomer/SLIFE Teacher at Gilbert Stuart Middle School.

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gabe Mernoff, and I am a PPSD graduate and community advocate. I'm here today to support more community input in decision-making for PPSD. We need a transparent process for the good of our kids and public schools, and we need transparency around hiring a new PPSD superintendent today!

The new superintendent should be chosen in a clear, transparent process that involves the community and the PPSD School Board. Right now, we need the State's support for efforts asking to post the vacancy for a new superintendent expeditiously!

Further, the Oversight Committee must continue to hold all school institutions accountable in carrying out their duty to include the community in everything they do.

Thank you, and please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Gabe Mernoff  
Phone: 401-612-4408  
Email: gmernoff@gmail.com



Dear members of the Rhode Island Senate Oversight Committee,

Thank you for your continued effort to act on behalf of Providence Students.

The bulk of the work done during the course of the state takeover has focused on managing adult behavior rather than supporting student outcomes. In fact, as a teacher in Providence Schools, I can honestly say the only difference that students notice or are effected by on the day to day basis of schooling are COVID-19 protocols. From the daily experience of PVD students, not a single tangible action from the state takeover has made it the level of the classroom in which would indicate any type of state intervention. The curriculums continue to be changed and rolled out with inefficient understanding by all adults. The frequency of the district standardized testing calendar continues, without any effort to stress a reason to need improvement. Field trips, experiential learning, and enrichment opportunities are still lacking or non-existent compared to our suburban counterparts.

What is highly noticeable, is the attempt to control and manage adult behaviors across the district. In fact, the state's positive talking points on the Teachers Union Contract are fixated on documentation of adult behavior and not on providing improvement of student achievement outcomes. Mandatory parent-teacher conferences, documenting after school events, etc. and the need to speed up the internal transfer hiring process of employees, which is actually slower this year than in past years are examples of this. My question for this Committee and the Department of Education is how are these contractual successes directly benefiting student achievement and how will they be measured? Also, are central administrators within the district and Department of Education employees also following these best practice behaviors and documenting their experiences with parents and at after school events?

During the February 28th Oversight Committee hearing, the Committee will hear a great deal about benchmarks that exist within the Turnaround Action Plan. However, the real success or failure of the state-takeover should be measured with the following question: What looks different in Providence Schools classrooms? Outside of air-filtration systems and a teacher with beaten down morale, it doesn't look any different than it did pre-state takeover.

I urge this committee in the coming months to reach out to our students and those closest to them in our schools. The current trajectory of the state takeover should not continue. Those of us in school buildings working every day want support, not a network of compliance. Our students deserve better.

Thank you,

Alexander Lucini

Music at West Broadway Middle School

Treasurer of the Providence Teachers Union

Monday, February 28, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairman DiPalma and members of the Senate Committee On Rules, Government Ethics And Oversight. My name is Peter Chung and I am a parent of a Providence Public School student at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Elementary School. I am here in support of Parents Leading for Education Equity (PLEE) and our efforts to hold the city of Providence and the State of Rhode Island accountable after it granted the Rhode Island Department of Education the authority to take control over the Providence Public School District.

The pandemic has certainly created more barriers and it is understandable that the Department of Education has deployed most of its resources and focus to support schools as they navigate reopening and adapt teaching and learning in a time of crisis. However, as we enter year 2 of the Turnaround Plan, I strongly urge leadership from Providence Schools to our Education Commissioner, Angélica Infante-Green to recommit to the strategic objectives and initiatives listed in the Turnaround Plan (TAP).

As a parent, I cannot tell you how frustrating it is to navigate our current school district especially when there is no transparency and accountability in decision making at all levels. We need to define these so students and families know where they can raise their concerns, advocate for their needs, or show their support for our schools. Additionally, as a school district that serves mainly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families, we need to do our community better by providing more culturally responsive communications to remove linguistic barriers.

Lastly, I would like to highlight one of the primary findings in the John Hopkins report. The report states **"School culture is broken, and safety is a daily concern for students and teachers. Our review teams encountered many teachers and students who do not feel safe in school.** There is widespread agreement that bullying, demeaning, and even physical violence are occurring within the school walls at very high levels, particularly at the middle and high school levels. We were particularly struck by the high incidence of teacher and student absenteeism, which appears closely linked to school culture and safety."

I am bringing attention to this specific priority because of its of great importance to the Turnaround Plan as well as the current time we are in. We need to create more welcoming, safe and healthy schools through positive and restorative strategies, which includes hiring mental health professionals, school social workers, and clinical psychologists who focus on alternative measures for conflict resolutions. Furthermore, **we need to remove school resource officers from all our schools to end the school-to-prison pipeline. This practice does not build school culture.**

I firmly believe that focusing on transparency, culturally responsive communication, and building healthy school culture will get us on the path to achieving the priorities in the

Turnaround Plan, engaged communities, excellence in learning, world class talent, and efficient district systems.

I would like to thank you all for providing me with the opportunity to provide public testimony on the Oversight on the State Turnaround effort in Providence Public Schools.

Sincerely,  
Peter Chung  
Providence Public Schools Parent

## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Friday, February 25, 2022 10:41 AM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: Oversight on the State Turnaround effort in Providence Public Schools

**From:** Erin Francis [mailto:eandrews82@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 25, 2022 10:27 AM  
**To:** SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** Oversight on the State Turnaround effort in Providence Public Schools

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regard to the state turnaround effort in Providence public schools where I have worked as a special educator for the past five years. To say that I am disappointed in the "turnaround" is an understatement. To say that I enjoy my job as much as I did before the takeover is a lie. To say that my students are thriving in our schools is hyperbole. To say that I feel supported and valued by "the network" would be complete fabrication. In reality, I have never felt so disheartened, saddened, and defeated as a teacher in my 18 year career.

I have worked in many positions and in different school systems. I have worked under four different principals three of which were in my short five years at the same school in Providence. Since the take over not only have we lost amazing school leadership, but I have watched many talented teachers, coaches, and support staff flee the Providence school system. I have witnessed morale disenigrate and the fierce desire to teach that my colleagues used to display has burnt out as quickly as the teachers themselves who are still coming to work everyday. Coming to work in horrible emotional and physical conditions. Feeling stretched so thin with no breaks, no support, and feeling unsafe.

Teachers and students alike are in survival mode. The pandemic is a factor, however the majority of the stress comes down to the utter failure of administration to value those of us who are still standing in front of our students.

The hardest part is that we were all excited for the take over. We were all so hopeful that, finally, the students would get the education they deserve in safe schools, where teachers were respected, and admired. Slowly, as the years have passed by and those assurances that our district would provide for our students has eroded, our hearts have become hardend and feelings of abandonment have taken over our feelings of hope.

Teachers handle it and push through the issues and persevere, as we always do. We put on a smile and give 100% of ourselves every single day no matter what. But the families? The families who deserve to feel safe in their communities, to feel that their children are valued by those who have the power to make their students schools better, who often don't always see how badly their children are being let down, are the ones my heart aches for.

Parents send their children into schools that are falling apart around them, and those students are then subjected to standardized tests that are not appropriate, thereby creating yet another unnecessary stress for them. Those children are then given, as possibly their only meal, food that is unhealthy and/or ill prepared, then sent to classrooms with sub par substitute teachers or no teachers, with no access to art, library, music, or physical education because those teachers are covering classrooms. Having no one to teach these specials is leaving teachers without a break or prep time, which is necessary to successfully implement a curriculum that changes every year or so.

Our students emotional health is in crisis, and the mental health of our teachers is tenuous at best. I assert that the largest factor for all of the aforementioned issues is directly correlated to the failed promises of the state and the fact that the "take over" became the "let down." This is not what the teachers were hopeful for, but honestly we aren't all that surprised, we've been let down before by those in charge. This is not what these parents expected, but this is now their reality. This is not what these students deserve, but this is what they are getting. Is this the best the state can do? If so we were much better off without them.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Erin Francis M.Ed

## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:29 AM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: Written Testimony re Oversight on State Turn Around effort in Providence Public Schools

**From:** kathleen mcdonough [mailto:kmcdunna@msn.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 2:48 PM  
**To:** SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** Written Testimony re Oversight on State Turn Around effort in Providence Public Schools

To: Oversight Committee

My name is Kathleen McDonough. I am a 31 year veteran teacher in the Providence School Department. Thank you for your time and commitment in overseeing the state takeover of Providence Schools.

As a 31 year veteran teacher, I have seen many changes take place in Providence Schools. Some changes have been impactful in both positive and negative ways. The state take over falls in the negative change bucket. Since RIDE took the helm, there has been a complete lack of consistent communication and collaboration with teachers. We receive last minute directives regarding the administration of assessments (ex Interim Assessments). We are expected to grade the assessments but given no time to do so. Another example of this failed takeover is the lack of collaboration between PPSD and RIDE. How successful can this takeover be when RIDE refuses to collaborate with the very people who can drive the changes needed to support our students and families. RIDE implements a top down managerial system. Instead of including teachers in the conversation, they choose to exclude us.

If this takeover continues the students will continue to suffer. Our students deserve to have teachers in front of them who are respected and valued as professionals. Our students deserve teachers who can make educational decisions regarding their students in front of them as opposed to following a script. Our students deserve better.

Thank you again for your time.

Kathleen McDonough  
Nathanael Greene Middle School  
PROVIDENCE Schools

Sent from Mail for Windows

## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:30 AM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: Testimony for Senate Oversight Hearing

**From:** Lisa Ricci [mailto:lisar2477@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 27, 2022 8:53 AM  
**To:** SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** Testimony for Senate Oversight Hearing

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Ricci and I am a 5th grade ESL teacher at Lillian Feinstein School at Sackett Street in Providence. I'm writing to you today to explain my frustrations and those of other teachers within PPSD and the State takeover.

First and foremost, I am sure you have heard already about the common theme of testimonials made against the commissioner and RIDE that has been shared among countless teachers, students, and parents.

### **A Day in the Life of Room B1**

Student A strolls in late, misses the morning work and most of the beginning of our math lesson. Not only is Student A late, but also hungry, so I give him the over processed sugary school breakfast that I save . About 15 minutes later, Student A is falling asleep at his desk. Call mom, mom says she will talk to him. Student continues to repeat the behavior. No guidance counselor or social worker can help me, seeing they are overloaded with cases in addition to subbing or covering classrooms.

Student B missed 2 years of in person learning. According to other teachers, she failed to attend virtually on a consistent basis. Student B is performing at a 2nd-3rd grade level in reading and math, but is in 5th grade. Currently she also has a high absenteeism rate in person. Lovely girl, but she is not ready for middle school. We are forced to move these children through with social promotion.

Student C, absent at least 1-2 times a week. Also performing on a 3rd grade level in reading and math. In addition, he can not write a complete sentence, but is expected to write essays on RICAS and pass with a score of Met Expectations or Exceeded Expectations.

These are just some of the stories out of 17 of my students. My question is, where are our resources? Our support personnel? Our attendance teams? I hear we no longer have truancy officers? Our counselors? Our administrators? Why is it on me to call parents daily? Why is it me who is expected to perform miracles to get these guys to grade level? Does RIDE or anyone else know what else we have on our plates? Last time I checked, I do not walk on water.

They want us to invest our time in American Reading Company, a reading program, conferencing with students, forcing them to read silently an hour a day while we pull small groups. We have to assign points to students through this program to show growth, but when points are not awarded because growth has not been identified, we get slapped on the wrist. They send ARC consultants to schools once a month for professional development. Teachers are getting pulled out of class during these PD's anywhere from 1-2 hours, away from our students. That's 1-2 hours of important instructional time. I can speak for other teachers that the professional developments are absolutely useless and so is ARC. It is not helping our students, and teachers are frustrated with it. The assignment of points to

show growth is only used to determine principal bonuses. I am also supposed to use particular resources from this program that I never received.

Let's talk about science. We don't have a science curriculum. I can't remember the last time an elementary science PD has been offered. We don't have resources for science other than a textbook. We are not given equipment or materials for experiments in which kids love! You know who has a thorough science curriculum.....Charter Schools. What a coincidence. My students ask me if we can do experiments. You know what I do, I research them myself, and I buy materials out of my own pocket to give them what they need so hopefully someday, one of them might want to go into science. But I can't keep digging into my pocket any longer as I have 2 kids of my own at home.

I am just done. I am done as being seen as insubordinate, the lazy, the enemy, or whatever you want to call it. I go with the flow because I need my job to support my family, so I try not to complain. However, I am not going to be demoralized any longer. I finally reached my breaking point. As I was forced to get my ESL endorsement in 2020 in order to keep my classroom position, I see it as a blessing now. I am so marketable at the moment that I have updated all my information and resumes so that I can look elsewhere. I realize that the grass isn't always greener, but nowhere can be as bad as PPSD. It is with no doubt that other teachers are doing the same thing. I don't want to leave because I love my school and I love our kids. I feel like I would be abandoning them, but the Network and RIDE's expectations are not good for my mental health.

I don't even know who this Network is. What are their credentials? They know everything about us, but we know nothing about them. The micromanaging and finger pointing is out of control. The extra work they put on us needs to stop. I beg you Chairman and Committee, I am pleading with you, to please go to bat for us. We have no one to fight for us, or hear us, or support us. Please consider everything that union members have to say, you know and I know that RIDE will squirm and deflect any questions to make themselves look good.

Thank you, and please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Ricci  
401-569-5952  
[LisaR2477@gmail.com](mailto:LisaR2477@gmail.com)



ReplyForward



## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 9:30 AM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: State Turnaround in Prov Public Schools

**From:** Brenda McGill [mailto:[brmcgills33@gmail.com](mailto:brmcgills33@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 26, 2022 12:13 PM  
**To:** SLegislation <[slegislation@rilegislature.gov](mailto:slegislation@rilegislature.gov)>  
**Subject:** State Turnaround in Prov Public Schools

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda McGill and I am a proud graduate of the Providence Public Schools. I write today to support more community input in the decision-making process for PPSD. A transparent process is needed to ensure the best effort for our youth and public schools. Please consider how to provide transparency around the hiring process of a new PPSD superintendent today!

The new superintendent should be chosen in a clear and transparent manner that involves the community and the PPSD School Board. We need the State's support of our efforts asking to post the vacancy for a new superintendent expeditiously!

Further, the Oversight Committee must continue to hold all school institutions accountable in carrying out their duty to include the community in everything they do.

Thank you, and please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Brenda McGill  
401-548-6312  
[brmcgills33@gmail.com](mailto:brmcgills33@gmail.com)

## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:32 PM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: written testimony for the Senate Oversight meeting 2-28-22

**From:** Amanda Vetelino [mailto:msvetelino@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 12:15 PM  
**To:** SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** written testimony for the Senate Oversight meeting 2-28-22

Good afternoon. My name is Amanda Vetelino and I am a teacher at Hope High School. I am unable to attend the Senate Oversight Committee meeting this evening; however, I wish for my testimony to be added to those that will be present.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Amanda K. Vetelino, M.Ed.  
ELA teacher  
Hope High School

Letter to the Senate Oversight Committee

## Jamie Plume

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**From:** SLegislation  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:33 PM  
**To:** Jamie Plume  
**Subject:** FW: Written Testimony for Senate Oversight Committee on the State Takeover of Providence Public Schools

**From:** Susan Garland [mailto:sgarland119@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2022 2:28 PM  
**To:** SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Senate Oversight Committee on the State Takeover of Providence Public Schools

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Susan Garland. I have worked in Providence Public Schools for 26 years. Currently, I am an art teacher and Department Leader for the "Electives" department at Juanita Sanchez Educational Department. I request that you end the State Takeover of Providence Public Schools.

I am going to focus specifically on my school and my department, however, my testimony brings to light a pattern of disregard for the needs of the whole child in Providence. Since the beginning of the takeover, we have lost an alarming number of our so-called "Electives" teaching positions at JSEC. I say "so-called Electives" because our students have so few options left, that calling them "Electives" is a misnomer. Students are unable to actually *elect* which courses they'll take. These classes I'm referring to are the classes that are also called "non-core." While the labels that have been assigned to the classes in my department are dismissive, in actuality, these are often the most important classes a student takes. They are the classes that allow children to find their passion, make connections in the world, practice life-skills, and take care of their physical, as well as their social-emotional health. These are the classes that connect our children with their humanity.

Last year at the Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex, students lost their opportunity to explore the performing arts. Our dance education program was cut. It had been part of our school since it began in 2003. It was unique in our district and a source of great pride. It also fulfilled the recommendations in RIDE's Basic Education Plan that all students should have the opportunity to become proficient in both visual art and a performing art form. Now, not only are students forced to take the only art form available, visual art, they only take it for half a year, which is clearly not enough time for them to become proficient. Students in other RI communities have a broad assortment of arts classes to choose from: band, chorus, acting, stage production, dance, digital media, ceramics, as well as the basic visual art class that we offer. They also have the time and space to explore and choose to become proficient. Providence students deserve these same opportunities.

Since the Takeover, JSEC has lost 2 physical education positions, meaning that class sizes are larger and students are now only taking PE and health for half a year. This is at a time when teenagers are in desperate need of the benefits of a daily focus on their health and well-being.

Most recently, JSEC has lost its last Business Education position. Before the takeover, we had 3 Business teachers. This year we were down to 1 position. Next year we will have no Business classes. This is at a time when our students and their families are crying out for more financial

literacy classes, such as classes on banking and credit; classes on navigating the student loan process; classes on investing and taxes; and classes that will teach them how to buy a home.

Whether it's intended or not, from where I'm standing, it appears that this takeover has been about taking choices from our students, leaving them to conform to an ever narrowing path of possibility. If we continue down this path we risk crushing the heart and soul of our Providence community.

Thank you for your diligence in doing this important work to ensure the best outcomes for our Providence students and their families. Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Susan Garland  
Phone: 401 419 6572  
Email: [sgarland119@gmail.com](mailto:sgarland119@gmail.com)