



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

May 6, 2024

Senator Samuel D. Zurier
Senate Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St
Providence RI, 02903

Dear Chairman Zurier and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Office of Mayor Brett P. Smiley, Providence City Council and Providence School Board commend the efforts of Chairman Zurier and the Special Legislative Commission to Review and Provide Recommendations for Professional and Labor-Management Standards that Provide School-based Flexibility and Accountability for Employees of the Providence Public Schools for their efforts drafting and editing this report.

The report provides a detailed account of national best practices concerning labor-management relations, professional standards, school-based flexibility and educator accountability, as well as recommendations for how Providence and Rhode Island can adopt these practices to support a school district that better serves Providence students. We recommend that all members vote for the passage of the Commission's report.

The central recommendation of the report is for stakeholders to work collectively to improve our educational system as Providence recovers from the impacts of COVID-19 and continues to operate under state intervention. Empowering educators who have dedicated their careers to teaching and mentoring students in Providence is central to these findings. We support the report's recommendations to best support these educators, including the adoption of teacher and management leadership teams at schools, increased school autonomy, peer assistance and review, and development of a career ladder. These steps will help Providence attract and retain education professionals who are committed to providing all children with a high-quality public education.

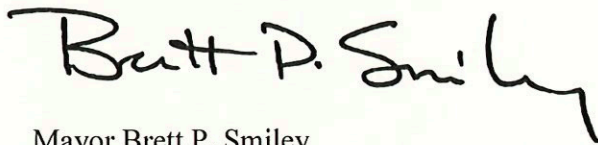
The report also affirms that to support a professional educator workforce, leadership must create a collaborative atmosphere and environment where teachers feel empowered and respected. Together, district and school-based administrators must work as partners with teachers to create effective school teams, improve student learning outcomes and promote teachers' professional growth and mastery. We must also recognize and remove the barriers that exist for young

educators and particularly educators of color to thrive in this field in order to build a workforce that reflects the lived experiences of Providence's diverse student body.

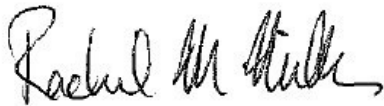
The in-depth review of the Springfield Empowerment Zone (SEZ) within the report provides a case study for Providence to emulate when considering how to build a sustainable foundation for improving Providence Public Schools. The SEZ offers a successful model of school-based management and holding schools accountable for results. The SEZ includes a collective bargaining agreement that includes a career ladder with incentives for leadership, recognizes exceptional performance by teachers and streamlines reassignment for teachers and staff who have been displaced. We feel a great sense of urgency to deliver high-quality public schools for thousands of students in Providence and believe that school-based autonomy and accountability is necessary for rapid improvement.

We commend Chairman Zurier for his engaged and thoughtful leadership on this Special Legislative Commission. This report is the culmination of in-depth research and expert testimony from educators, researchers and education policy experts, and provides a pathway that is aspirational but achievable on how Providence stakeholders may work together to collectively improve our educational system. Investments in better labor and management for teachers will lead to evident progress on student outcomes and goals outlined in the Turnaround Action Plan, and we respectfully ask the commission to vote for passage of this report.

Sincerely,



Mayor Brett P. Smiley
City of Providence



Council President Rachel Miller
Providence City Council



President Erlin Rogel
Providence School Board