



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196
401-222-2080

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

July 19, 2017

TO THE HONORABLE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE:

In accordance with the provisions of Article IX, Section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and Section 43-1-4 of the Rhode Island General Laws, I transmit, with my disapproval, 2017-S 0884, “An Act Relating to Education – Establishment of Public Charter Schools.”

Last year, the legislature passed and I signed Senate Bill 3075, which requires charter school leaders who wish to open more than one school under the same charter to obtain written support from their local communities. Multiple schools under a single charter were defined as “Network” charter schools. That legislation came about through a broader compromise that included changes to the funding formula and charter approval process to help districts who were experiencing financial loss as a result of charter school growth.

This legislation, Senate Bill 0884, would expand the definition of a “network” charter school to include a single elementary school that serves students from grades K-8 – classifying that one school as two schools.

A K-8 elementary school is not two schools. Treating a K-8 school as multiple schools creates added administrative burdens and serves as a block to current and new schools developing academic programs that best fit the needs of their students and school community.

This legislation serves only one purpose – to create an additional, unnecessary barrier to more students accessing high-quality charter schools.

In our State, successful elementary, middle and high schools have taken many shapes and sizes with many different grade configurations that suit the needs of their students. Recent research demonstrates significant advantages for students who attend K-8 schools. In fact, some of our school districts are looking at the possibility of moving back to K-8 models in an effort to boost

student achievement. This legislation would encourage, and in some cases require, schools to stay at grades K-6, and thus adopt practices contrary to research.

Last year, when I signed Senate Bill 3075, I believed in good faith that we reached a compromise that would help Rhode Island move beyond the battles of the past and allow educators, districts, charters, and families to work together to improve all of our public schools.

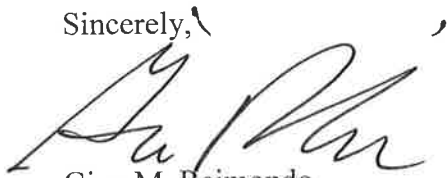
The proposed changes to this definition are not based on evidence or research, nor are they being made for any substantive policy reasons. Rhode Island already caps the number of charters, limiting charter school growth. Last year, we addressed the financial concerns of districts by including density aid as a new component to the funding formula, and through Senate Bill 3075, ensured that financial impacts and community input were included as part of the charter school approval process. The existing statutory language already has an appropriate definition of a network charter, and this proposed change will only have negative repercussions that would limit educational opportunities for our students. I see no benefit to changing it.

Every student deserves the chance to attend the public school best suited to meet his or her individual needs, as determined by his or her parents and family. I will not sign a bill that makes it harder for high quality schools to expand seats for families demanding more options.

As I said at the end of last session, it remains my hope that we can move on from this constant focus on a small number of public schools, and instead broaden our focus on doing what is necessary to create a world-class public education system for every child in the state.

I disapprove of this legislation and respectfully urge your support of my veto.

Sincerely,



Gina M. Raimondo
Governor