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**COMMENTS ON 15 S-607 –
RELATING TO EDUCATION
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The ACLU of Rhode Island urges your opposition to this bill, which would funnel state money to private and parochial schools through a “school choice” program. At a time when public schools’ budgets across the state remain in serious trouble, and these schools grapple with having to eliminate various school-related academic and extra-curricular activities, it is simply unacceptable to establish a program that would provide yet additional money to private and parochial schools and further starve public schools.

Some supporters of programs like these argue that low and middle- income parents need alternatives to poorly performing public schools. The solution to failing public schools, however, is not to use tax dollars to divert students to private schools, and thus create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Siphoning dollars away from the public schools is contrary to the premise of a public school system that serves all, with the support of all, and undermines efforts to address the financial problems that many public schools are facing.

As a result of laws passed over the years that provide for “scholarship tax credits,” textbook aid, and school transportation, to give a few examples, it is worth emphasizing that the state already provides substantial taxpayer-funded aid to private (and mostly religious) schools. Now is not the time to provide them more.

We therefore urge the Committee to reject S-607.