

September 6, 2013

The Hon. Lincoln Chafee
Governor
State House
Providence, RI 02903

HAND-DELIVERED

Dear Governor Chafee:

On Monday, your Board of Education will be taking what we believe to be the most important vote of its short tenure. We are writing to urge you to encourage the Board to do the right thing and support the petition on which they will be voting.

Specifically, the Board will be voting on whether to engage in a public and transparent rule-making process to consider repeal of its controversial high-stakes testing graduation requirement for high school seniors. We know you are aware of the harmful effect this requirement may have. More than 4,000 seniors – most of whom are low-income, racial minorities, students with disabilities, or English language learners, and all of whom don't deserve to have their adult fate determined by a standardized test – are at risk of not getting a diploma because of their scores on the NECAP test.

We have enclosed the petition, and the accompanying letter, that more than two dozen organizations have sent the Board for its consideration. We note that the City of Providence and the General Assembly have also passed resolutions in recent months urging the Board to delay implementation of this unsupportable requirement.

Time is running out. Students who have otherwise demonstrated that they deserve a diploma - through their grades and their senior projects – risk all of the damaging consequences that will flow from their lack of a high school diploma, to say nothing of the uncertainty and stress it is bringing to their senior year. We believe that, by speaking out now and urging your Board to support the petition process, you will be allowing for a full and fair public discussion on this divisive issue – one that this new Board has not yet had. You will be demonstrating your commitment to a transparent process in addressing one of the most critical educational issues we are facing. And you will be recognizing that a graduation requirement that has generated so many questions by so many people in the educational field and that has such a discriminatory impact on certain students in Rhode Island deserves the attention that the petition requests.

We thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of this request. In addition, members of our coalition – students, parents, teachers and advocates – would greatly appreciate discussing this issue at greater depth with you, and would request to schedule a meeting with you in the near future.

Steven Brown
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF RHODE ISLAND

Joanne Quinn
THE AUTISM PROJECT

Simon Moore
COLLEGE VISIONS

Fred Ordonez
DIRECT ACTION FOR RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Julian Rodriguez-Drix
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEAGUE OF RHODE ISLAND

Heiny Maldonado
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Jim Vincent
NAACP, PROVIDENCE BRANCH

Cathy Ciano
PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK OF RHODE ISLAND

Aaron Regunberg
PROVIDENCE STUDENT UNION

Chanravy Proeung
PROVIDENCE YOUTH STUDENT MOVEMENT

Anne Mulready
RHODE ISLAND DISABILITY LAW CENTER

Nancy Cloud
RHODE ISLAND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Dennis B. Langley
URBAN LEAGUE OF RHODE ISLAND

Karen Feldman
YOUNG VOICES

Adeola Ordeola
YOUTH IN ACTION

Enclosures