



WARWICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Shaun Galligan, Chair

Leah Hazelwood, Vice Chair
David Testa, Member

Michelle Kirby-Chapman Clerk
Sean Wiggins, Member

October 8, 2025

The Honorable Frank J. Picozzi, Mayor of Warwick
The Honorable Members of the Warwick City Council
The Honorable Members of the Warwick School Budget Commission
Warwick City Hall
3275 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02886

Re: FY 2026 School Department Budget

Dear Mayor Picozzi, Members of the City Council and Members of the School Budget Commission,

The Warwick School Budget Commission was created by the RI General Assembly at the request and with the active advocacy of the Mayor and City Council, which drafted the enabling statute and appointed a School Budget Commission on which the Mayor and City Council holds a majority. By design and in practice, the School Budget Commission has superseded the School Committee's authority on budget matters. It must advance a recommended budget to the Mayor, who must forward it to the City Council. If a balanced budget cannot be certified, the responsible entity must pursue relief under the Caruolo Act. Under the current structure, that responsibility lies with the School Budget Commission rather than the Warwick School Committee.

As publicly stated by School Budget Commission member (and former Interim Finance Director) Joseph H. Crowley, the district's recent deficits were driven by inadequate funding to meet legally required services—exacerbated by an ill-suited legacy finance system that impaired timely visibility—not by “poor fiscal discipline.” The School Budget Commission's months of review found no evidence of poor fiscal discipline; the district has provided required services to more than 8,000 students, while federal and state mandates (notably IDEA) remain substantially underfunded. The software is being replaced, and the School Budget Commission pressed the district to reduce

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costs—resulting in the elimination of 47 positions and more than \$3 million in personnel expenses, with some services reduced, restructured or no longer provided.

The School Budget Commission also offered no objections to the FY26 budget and in fact, approved the budget in the amount of \$201,442,834.28 more than that presented by the district—one that reflects the costs necessary to operate the district without ending in another deficit—and the School Budget Commission understands it cannot legally endorse a budget projected to end in deficit.

Separately, the School Budget Commission's FY26 presentation validated the school department's need for additional funding. In May, the school department's request was shorted by approximately \$2 million. After every feasible reduction has been made, only additional revenue can responsibly close this gap and meet the community's expectations for quality education while complying with law.

Throughout this process, Warwick Public Schools and the School Committee have complied with all applicable charter and regulatory requirements and will continue to work with the School Budget Commission in good faith. The Rhode Island Department of Education is seeking confirmation of an approved, balanced budget. If that cannot be certified, the law requires the filing of a Caruolo action—and, again, that filing authority rests with the Commission under the current framework.

Accordingly, time is of the essence thus we respectfully request clarity and action:

1. Will the Mayor and City Council appropriate the \$2.1 million necessary to balance the FY26 Warwick Public Schools budget?
OR
2. Will the Mayor and City Council direct the School Budget Commission to initiate a Caruolo action in Rhode Island Superior Court to obtain the funds required by law?

The Warwick School Department has already exhausted all feasible reductions. Every possible cut has been made without compromising the quality of education to a degree that would be unacceptable to our community. At this point, only additional revenue can close the gap.

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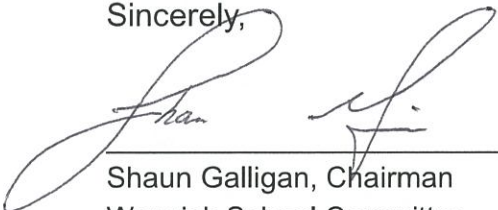
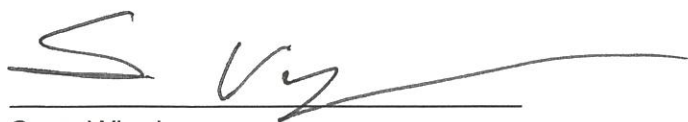
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The Warwick School Committee and Superintendent remain committed to full compliance with all charter and statutory requirements, and we have consistently worked with the School Budget Commission in good faith. However, this matter can no longer remain unresolved. The law is clear, and the responsibility to act now rests with the administration that created, controls, and holds majority authority over the School Budget Commission.

The students, families, and taxpayers of Warwick deserve both clarity and compliance with the law. We ask for your prompt response to this question of whether you will appropriate the necessary funds or pursue a Caruolo action.

Sincerely,


Shaun Galligan, Chairman
Warwick School Committee
Leah Hazelwood
Vice Chair
Michelle Kirby-Chapman
Clerk
David Testa
Member
Sean Wiggins
Member

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