

Lisa Cataldi

From: RI Atheists <riatheists@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 25, 2023 2:51 PM
To: House Education Committee
Cc: Rep. McNamara, Joseph M.; Rep. Noret, Thomas E.; Rep. Kislak, Rebecca M.; Rep. Biah, Nathan W.; Rep. Caldwell, Justine A.; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Cotter, Megan L.; Rep. Donovan, Susan R; Rep. Giraldo, Joshua J.; Rep. Morales, David; Rep. Perez, Ramon A.; Rep. Phillips, Robert D.; Rep. Rea, Brian J.; Rep. Roberts, Sherry; Rep. Voas, Brandon T.
Subject: Testimony Correction: Against 5688

My name is Joseph Burgio, Director of Rhode Island Atheists, and I am against H5688. This bill proposes rights that parents already have while discriminating against children and families from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, banning stories of people of the LGBTQ+ community from the classroom could make some students feel alienated.

We stand against censoring teachers from teaching because legislators and conspiracy theorist parents don't like the truth. So called "Parents Rights" groups seek to restrict children from being taught in an inclusive environment where viewpoints of all marginalized peoples are studied. Instead, their agenda pushes a strictly narrow Christian perspective.

Teaching children that LGBTQ+ individuals exist and normalizing their existence is not sexualizing children. We must not lose focus on making sure that every student feels safe, welcome, respected, and loved while at school- no matter their race, income, ZIP code, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The "parents bill of rights" emanates from the current moral panic on the political right about the teaching of so-called critical race theory in schools. What we have seen in other states is that when such laws are passed, books are pulled from libraries and curriculums, teachers and administrators are harassed, and important lessons about our country's history and culture are suppressed, for fear of becoming the next victim of a Fox News pile-on.

Thank you for your consideration.
Joseph Burgio
Director
Rhode Island Atheists