



Dear Chairperson and Representatives,

My name is Joseph Burgio, Director of Rhode Island Atheists, and we strongly OPPOSE H7781- The Parents “Bill of Rights.” This bill is the product of a coordinated, nationwide by a small percentage of extremist parents backed by wealthy special interest groups. Their goal is the censorship of classroom discussion of race, gender, sexuality, and other material that challenges the status quo and acknowledges the lived experiences of minority communities.

Education is an institution that allows youth to develop into individual adults with informed decisions and values. It is vital for our democracy and culture that the next generation is challenged to think for themselves as protected by their right to learn. With enough open, accurate discussions in the classroom, we can live in a more equitable world. Furthermore, this legislation would systematically marginalize and punish LGBTQ+ students.

This legislation would also have a significantly negative effect on student-teacher relationships at a time when student mental health is a concern. Children struggling with identity issues or abuse need safe adults to be able to disclose to and trust. For many students, schools are a safe place. In addition, this so called “parents bill of rights” violates the rights of youth and other parents in the community under the guise of protecting rights that parents as a whole already have. Rhode Island’s children and families should not have to suffer as a result of the radical whims of the religious right in our state. Please oppose this legislation.

Thank you for your time,

Joseph Burgio

Director

Rhode Island Atheists

RIAtheists.com