

Chair McNamara and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 5487.

My name is Nick Lee. I'm a college student at Brown University, the Co-President of Students for Educational Equity, and I come here in full support of Bill H.85487. I have been referring to this bill as "the bill to end legacy admissions", but I come here to start the conversation and talk about what that really means. H.8202 simply states that no university should prefer a student for admission because they're related by blood to somebody who has previously attended the school. In practice, universities don't apply this to siblings, so think about parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts.

Why do I, a 21-year-old kid who got into a great university, care so much? For one, I know how much privilege I will receive by being a graduate from one of the top and wealthiest schools in the country. I know that I can probably get a top-tier job, I know that I'll probably be making over the median household income, and I know that I'll receive an immense amount of respect in the professional workforce. After all, that's the whole selling card. Most of all, I know that my children will have legacy status.

But I study Education at Brown and in my time away from the university classroom, I teach civil rights to youth from Providence and around the country who attend public schools barely holding under their own weight. The students I teach are talented and motivated, deserving of attention from top universities across the Northeast. Yet, by their own admission, these universities prioritize the students who already have the connection and privilege attached to the name. This university is still set up to prioritize the privileged few, over the community in their very state.

My dream, Committee, is to serve as a Civil Rights lawyer defending youth and working in education desegregation. But how can I uplift students to goals of higher education when these schools won't give underrepresented students a fair shot?

The proof is in the numbers. We know that legacy students are three to five times as likely to get into their parent's school as any other top college. The truth is, they're not any more likely than

the average applicant to get into another top college. We know that top universities are still accepting more students from the top 10% than from the bottom 80%. And we know that 78% of legacy students come from the top tenth. It leaves us asking the question: why, when so many forms of equitable education are under attack, do colleges continue to have advantage for rich students?

Therefore, I ask that you eliminate legacy admissions throughout the state of Rhode Island. Universities won't change unless the state does first. The reality is that, at colleges across the country, students are signing petitions, holding votes, and calling within their student governments to end legacy admissions. At Brown University in Providence, the supermajority of undergraduates has twice voted in favor of ending the practice. Yet legacy admissions remain as present as when it began in the 1920s. But there is currently a movement, from California to Virginia to here in Rhode Island, to get rid of the legacy admissions practice once and for all.

I'm proud to be part of this work towards a more equitable university admissions process, and I hope you join me by supporting Bill H. 5487 to end legacy admissions in Rhode Island. As I've been saying a lot recently, leave your legacy.