

Good morning,

I write today in strong support of The School Libraries Act, H5488. As a middle and high school librarian, I have witnessed firsthand how vibrant, well-staffed school libraries transform students' lives—and yet, some of our Rhode Island public schools risk losing these critical hubs of learning and equity.

School libraries are far more than a room full of books: they are the dynamic center for inquiry, collaboration, and personalized learning. Under the guidance of a certified school librarian, students:

- **Develop information-literacy skills** that prepare them to navigate an ever-expanding digital landscape—evaluating sources, discerning bias, and constructing evidence-based arguments.
- **Cultivate a love of reading** through targeted book recommendations and one-on-one guidance—building the lifelong literacy habits that research shows correlate with academic success across all subjects.
- **Engage in project-based learning** by accessing diverse resources—print, digital, and multimedia—and receiving scaffolded support in research design, digital citizenship, and ethical use of information.

Numerous studies confirm that strong school library programs correlate with higher standardized-test scores, improved graduation rates, and increased student engagement (especially among struggling readers). Moreover, libraries offer a safe haven: a climate where students can explore sensitive topics, find social-emotional support, and experience the joy of self-directed discovery.

Please support The School Libraries Act H5488. By doing so, you ensure that every public-educated Rhode Island student—today and in the future—has access to a thriving library program, guided by a professional librarian, and stocked with the resources needed to succeed in school and beyond. Our state's commitment to literacy, critical thinking, and lifelong learning depends on it.

Thank you for your consideration and for standing with students, families, and educators in safeguarding our school libraries.

Sincerely,

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