

Dear Education Committee Clerk, Lisa Cataldi,

I am writing in support of the School Libraries Act H5488. As a thirty year educator and a PPSD HS librarian, I can speak on the importance of school libraries for our Rhode Island students. A school library is the center of the school where people of all ages can find books and resources to navigate their education, growth, social situations, families, and lives where they can grow to become productive citizens. The school librarian provides a safe environment where all students are respected for their uniqueness and diversity. In my library, I keep the library open during lunch for students who need refuge from the loud cafeteria environment as well as a meeting space to collaborate or work individually. Countless children enjoy being in my library because they find it calming and welcoming. Librarians create programs and activities which complement school curriculums and encourage students to utilize the resources to further their education. This school year in collaboration with Brown University Libraries, I hosted two acclaimed young adult authors, Jacqueline Woodson and Jason Reynolds. High School students throughout the Providence School District were provided books to read and discuss and participated in a meet and greet with the authors. At my school I hosted a Reader's Cafe where the students discussed the novels by answering student submitted questions. These programs support the district curriculum as well as encourage peer discourse. Along with all these positive attributes, having a certified librarian in every school allows for a professional to make connections with students to support their learning paths and social emotional growth to develop confident individuals. Our school libraries are essential resources for all Rhode Island students, and students should have equitable access to them as the center for learning and discovery in every school. I want school libraries to remain open for all current and future students, no matter the socioeconomic setting, and, for that reason, I am urging you to support H5488 which will guarantee that we keep our school libraries and school librarians in every school.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Yeaw
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