

Dear Clerk Sepe,

I am writing in strong support of the School Libraries Act H5488 as someone who is completing my Master's degree in Library and Information Science this summer and preparing to enter the field as a school librarian in Rhode Island.

Throughout my education, I have studied the critical role that school libraries play in student success. Beyond just housing books, school libraries are vibrant learning centers where students develop essential information literacy skills they need to navigate our increasingly complex digital world. As someone who has dedicated my professional future to this field, I have seen firsthand how librarians teach students to find, evaluate, and use information responsibly—skills that are more crucial now than ever before.

Research consistently shows that schools with well-staffed, well-resourced libraries see higher reading scores, improved literacy rates, and better academic outcomes across all subject areas. These benefits are particularly pronounced for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have access to books or technology at home.

The School Libraries Act H5488 would ensure that every student in Rhode Island has equitable access to these vital resources and qualified professionals to guide their learning journey. Without this legislation, we risk creating a two-tiered education system where only students in certain communities benefit from the proven advantages that school libraries provide.

As I prepare to begin my career as a school librarian, I am deeply concerned about ensuring all students—regardless of their zip code or socioeconomic status—have access to the resources and information literacy instruction that will prepare them for success in college, careers, and civic life.

I urge you to support H5488 to protect and strengthen our school libraries for current and future generations of Rhode Island students.

Sincerely,

Melissa Stevens

Cranston, RI