

April 22, 2025

Dear RI Speaker of the House Shekarchi, House Majority Leader Blazewski, Representative Handy, and Clerk Sepe:

My name is Michelle Steever and **I am writing in support of the School Libraries Act H5488.** I have worked in public schools as a school librarian since 2002. I am a RIDE certified school library media specialist and alumna of URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Science (an ALA accredited program).

Every Rhode Island student should have the support of a full time, certified school librarian and access to well funded school libraries. The Basic Education Plan (BEP), written by the RI Department of Education (RIDE), requires schools to provide library media programs but does not adequately safeguard library programs from being cut by local school districts. Many school districts have ignored the BEP and have made cuts to library programs and library staff, including closing school libraries. Such action denies students access to learning resources that school libraries and certified school librarians provide, creating an equity issue in the state.

Decades of research show a correlation between schools with full time certified school librarians and English language arts test scores, graduation rates, and enjoyment in learning. According to the article [Investing in School Libraries and Librarians To Improve Literacy Outcomes](#) (Otero Martinez, 2024), more than 50 years of research show that students with access to well-resourced school libraries **with certified school librarians** consistently perform better academically and score higher on standardized assessments. School Librarians teach media and information literacy skills, increasingly important skills in an age of misinformation and disinformation. For many students, the school library is their only source for selecting the books they want to read, encouraging them to become life-long readers. **School libraries staffed by full time certified school librarians must be essential components of every Rhode Island school.**

Please vote to support H5488.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michelle Steever". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michelle Steever
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