

House Education Committee

March 10, 2026

Testimony in support of **H 7417**, an act relating to education - The Save RI School Libraries Act

Dear Rep. Joseph McNamara, Rep. Rebecca Kislak and Members of the Education Committee,

I am a past president and current board member of School Libraries of RI, and an elementary and middle school librarian in Cranston, RI. The bill before you will officially set guidelines for public school districts and charter schools in regards to keeping school libraries in schools, and certified, degreed, librarians (aka school library media specialists, teacher-librarians) in the library.

For the past 10 years or more, unfunded mandates and underfunded school budgets have forced school districts to look hard for ways to trim programs. This has already affected library programs by cutting book budgets, and splitting librarians between two and sometimes 3 schools! In some cases, as with Cumberland, Pawtucket, Tiverton, and Providence, middle and high schools have lost their librarian completely.

Numerous studies have already shown that high quality library programs lead to better student achievement. The most consistent finding is that there is a positive correlation between schools staffed with qualified school librarians and higher language arts scores regardless of student demographics. Conversely, some studies have shown that losses of librarians were also associated with declines or inferior gains in reading scores (Lance, Keith Curry).

Please help us preserve the institution of school libraries before it's too late!
Thank you for your time and consideration of giving S 2078 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Deanna Brooks,
SLRI Board Member and Past President
Elementary and Middle School Librarian with Cranston Schools

Lance, K.C. & Kachel, D.E. (2018). Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99 (7), 15-20