

March 9, 2026

Dear House Education Committee,

I am writing in favor of H 7417, the Save Rhode Island's School Libraries Act. I strongly believe that well funded school libraries staffed with certified, trained school librarians are essential to the education and development of all children and students. Research has consistently reinforced that view with study after study pointing to higher achievement among students, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic region (<https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>).

As a retired school librarian, I witnessed the power of school libraries. I saw how school libraries affect the lives of students. As an educator in Providence public schools, I worked with students, many of them immigrants and refugees, who struggled with learning English. I developed a library collection that allowed these English language learners to read according to their proficiency level. These students challenged themselves by choosing books with higher reading levels so that their English continued to improve. I encouraged these readers to join book clubs and to share their thoughts with their peers. I saw their confidence grow so that they joined other school activities and became successful in their studies. Because I was able to provide a wide variety of reading materials at multiple reading levels, these students were able to grow and flourish in their high school careers and beyond.

Students of all backgrounds benefited from the library services I was able to provide over the years. They were able to select reading materials according to their own interests. They discovered a love of reading when they came upon the right book. Students working on research projects learned how to locate and select appropriate sources. Students learned how to evaluate sources of all types so that could determine the credibility of sources. They learned Internet safety tips and digital citizenship. Students working on their senior projects found the resources they needed and synthesized their ideas into cohesive projects.

Students need their school libraries. And they need their school librarians to be there for them to provide the resources and guidance they need to thrive. We need the School Libraries Act to pass so that we can be sure that school libraries continue to be there for our students. When we see school districts close school libraries, like the closing of Nathaniel Greene Middle School's library in Providence this year, we know our school libraries are in danger. When we see Coventry High School limit their high school access to their library to only a few hours a week, we see that libraries are being undervalued. When we learn that elementary school libraries are closed in Newport or that middle school libraries are closed in Cumberland, we know that we need to act to save school libraries.

Please pass the Save Rhode Island's School Libraries Act this year.

Sincerely,

Peter Quesnel

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