

## Written Testimony in Favor of H7417

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is **Tasha White**, and I am the full-time Library Media Specialist at Alfred Lima Elementary School in Providence, Rhode Island. Our school serves just under 700 K–5 multilingual learners. We have inclusion classrooms where students with special needs are supported, as well as dual-language classrooms in every grade level.

Before becoming a Library Media Specialist, I spent 13 years as an elementary classroom teacher in Providence. For my first five years as a Library Media Specialist, I was split between two schools (2½ days in each building), serving more than 800 students and teaching 36 classes every week. Now that I am full time in one building, I am able to more effectively meet the needs of our students, collaborate with teachers on curriculum, and support families across our school community.

A trained Library Media Specialist fulfills multiple roles within a school community: **teacher, leader, program administrator, information specialist, and instructional partner**. Because we work with every student and teacher in the building, we are uniquely positioned to understand both individual student needs and the broader instructional goals of the school.

One example of this work is collaborating with teachers and curating **LLARC (Lima Library American Reading Company) book bags** that enrich the core ELA curriculum. We intentionally select materials that reflect the diversity of our community, including bilingual books and stories that provide both **mirrors and windows**—allowing students to see themselves reflected while also developing empathy and understanding of others.

Library Media Specialists also support **social-emotional learning**. We curate SEL resources aligned with CASEL standards for students, teachers, families, and mental health staff. We also run SEL book clubs that provide safe spaces for students to discuss their experiences, build connections, and develop confidence.

In addition, we teach **digital citizenship and media literacy beginning as early as Pre-K**. Students learn how to navigate the internet safely, evaluate sources, cite evidence, and critically examine who created information and why. At a time when more than 80% of the web is not designed for children, these skills are essential for students, families, and educators alike.

Through coding activities, research projects, and creative problem-solving opportunities, we also encourage independence and productive struggle so students learn how technology works and how they can use it to **create knowledge—not just consume it**.

Last year alone, the Alfred Lima Elementary School library circulated **over 16,000 books** to students and teachers. Being a full-time Library Media Specialist allows me to better support the needs of our community. However, librarians are still frequently assigned duties such as lunch coverage that reduce time available for library instruction and student support. When librarians are split between multiple schools, these challenges are even greater.

I plan to attend and speak at the hearing, but I wanted to submit this written testimony beforehand to provide context for the many roles and responsibilities Library Media Specialists fulfill each day.

In today's world, it is difficult to imagine how schools—and society—can move forward without **certified, full-time Library Media Specialists in every school across Rhode Island**. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

With respect,

Tasha White  
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