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From: sdoyle@rifthp.org
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 1:29 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Support for H7526 (Health & Safety of Pupils - Student & Teacher Classroom Safety)

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Dear Honorable Members of the House Education Committee:

I write to urge passage of H7526 (Health and Safety of Pupils – Student and Teacher Classroom Safety).

In my thirty-four years of teaching in public school district classrooms, I have personally witnessed unsafe behaviors that have been allowed to exist absent appropriate responses such as effective positive behavioral and social emotional interventions for students. Likewise, I have witnessed teachers who have felt real or perceived pressures that addressing such student behaviors will result in pushback from administrators, superintendents, and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). In many cases, the teacher is not included in any discussion or plan to reinstate a student after an unsafe incident. These circumstances adversely impact the learning environment for all students within the affected classroom.

It appears that principals are pressured to lower “numbers” related to disciplinary actions. That pressure is often vocalized by principals who state: “I’ve been told to reduce my [disciplinary] numbers”. Principals often cite pressure from superintendents who then often cite pressure from attorneys and RIDE. Educators support every student’s right to a free and appropriate education; however, we must insist on safety as being the foremost necessity to provide such.

Most teachers only utilize dismissal from class as a final resort to salvage the learning experience for other students or to maintain a safe learning environment. In some cases, inappropriate student classroom behavior has the potential to shut down any semblance of teaching and learning in a classroom; in its worst cases it poses a direct threat to the health and safety of teachers and students, including the dysregulated student. I am personally aware of instances where students demonstrated extreme dysregulation and have caused injury to themselves or others only to be returned to the classroom during that very same teaching period/block. There is no effective, restorative strategy that can allow a highly dysregulated student to safely return to a class in literal minutes.

We live in a time where violence is becoming an expected result of disagreement - we plan for it, our students practice responses to it, and we must remain vigilant in addressing it. Students, families, and staff should, as a basic right, expect that every step is taken to promote safe schools and safe school settings where all students can learn and thrive.

Sincerely,
Sean J. Doyle

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