

House Education Committee
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

May 18, 2026

Re: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill H8531

Dear Chairperson Joseph M. McNamara, Senator Hanna M. Gallo and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Amanda Cook from North Kingstown, Rhode Island, representing House District 32.

I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill H8531.

Rhode Island's current homeschool law is already working, and I do not believe additional regulation is necessary. Families already fall under existing child protection laws, which apply to everyone. What concerns me most about this bill is the introduction of vague and subjective standards such as "competency," "capacity," and what is in a child's "best interest," which could lead to inconsistent decisions across districts.

This is not just a policy concern for me—it is personal.

My son attended a charter school from kindergarten through third grade. Despite having an IEP, he remained severely behind in reading the entire time. I repeatedly requested dyslexia testing and additional support, but was told to wait and that he "would get there." He never did. He was bullied, struggled daily, and spent time in "independent reading" blocks where he was not able to access the material because he could not read it, which ultimately meant he was not learning.

It was only after I made the decision to remove him from that environment and begin homeschooling that things changed. I had him privately evaluated, and he was finally diagnosed with dyslexia. That diagnosis confirmed what I had been fighting to have taken seriously for years.

From there, I began teaching him myself while also paying out of pocket for a private dyslexia tutor. In just one year of homeschooling, my son moved up two grade levels in reading. He is now in fourth grade, reading at a second-grade level—and more importantly, he is no longer being left behind or made to feel incapable. This is because I chose to do what I knew was in the best interest of my son, and not what the public school system thought was in his best interest.

Homeschooling changed the trajectory for my child.

Because of that experience, I am deeply concerned that H8531 could delay or restrict families who need to make immediate educational changes for their children. Parents should not have to prove they are "good enough" to homeschool without clear evidence of harm or risk, especially when they are acting in their child's best interest.

I am concerned that families like mine—who are trying to act in the best interest of their child after documented struggles—could be forced to remain in environments that are not meeting their needs while waiting for approval. I am worried that parents who have already fought for years to get appropriate support may now face another layer of gatekeeping when trying to choose a different path for their child. And I am concerned that this bill does not trust parents who have lived through these experiences and are making informed, sometimes very difficult decisions to support their children’s education. Parents know their children the best.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote against House Bill H8531.

Thank you for your time and your service to Rhode Island families.

Sincerely,
Amanda Cook
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House District 32