

# Written Testimony for House Bill 8531

Date: 18 May 2026

Re: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 8531

Dear Chair McNamara and Members of the Education Committee:

I am vehemently opposed to H8531. We moved to Rhode Island from Arizona, leaving family, friends, and a lifetime of memories. Our son started homeschooling in Arizona in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, graduated last year, moved back, is gainfully employed, and continues his education. Our daughter is 13, always been homeschooled. She is in American Heritage Girls, rides horses, and volunteers extensively. We are avid global travelers, meeting people and exploring cultures that otherwise would be off-limits due to constraining schedules. Homeschooling allows us to meet the attendance and still spend time together as a family. I know my children in a way that goes beyond the morning routine and tucking them in at night.

Rhode Island has more requirements than Arizona which we have consistently complied with and have had excellent support from the Chariho School District.

This bill contains blatant disregard for parental rights and bears no necessity in a state where homeschooling has been successfully managed for decades.

1. A Letter of Intent is a homeschooling family's statement that they will follow the law as it is written and abide by those regulations. It is a binding document between the parent/guardian and the school district. Homeschool families don't take this lightly. For a school district to presume a family would submit in writing their intent, then act in complete disregard for the content of said letter, is an unfair and unjust assumption.
2. If the school district has filed a "truancy, habitual truancy, or other attendance-related petition" and it remains pending, the school district has both the right and the obligation to follow through to bring the actions to a close as indicated by law. However, a petition to homeschool does not permit the school district to carry over those filings from their jurisdiction to that of the parents. They are mutually exclusive and the rights of a parent to homeschool can't be ignored because a school district lacked expediency or neglected to follow protocol in truancy cases.

3. Regarding the committee determining that the “proposed primary instructor... lacks the competency and the capacity necessary... capacity to maintain required attendance records and reporting” see Number 1 above. 180 days is required and this is on the Letter of Intent. Online record keeping, spreadsheets, and daily trackers are all ways used to ensure homeschoolers are educated for the minimum number of days. It should be noted that many homeschoolers far surpass this as our family regularly exceeds 200 days each school year. Our family views every opportunity as a possible lesson whether traditional subjects, character building, or exploring an interest. As far as the instructor’s competency and capacity we are in a society that everything is available if you look. There are endless arrays of learning options from co-ops to virtual instruction, experts in their fields willing to explain concepts, and even curriculum hotlines that assist in challenging times. My desire to educate my children drives me to give them the best outcome and I am committed to that end. A school district has neither the authority nor the intimacy to know what my competency is and is, again, being presumptuous in their assessment.
4. A school district’s determination of what is in the best interest of the child is not a standard when a third party is determining “best interest”. In this case the school committee.

I have been a homeschool Mom for a total thus far of 16 combined years between my two children and can honestly say it was the best decision we ever made. It has not always been easy, but it has always been right. I have enjoyed the freedom to watch my children excel and the freedom to watch them fail as they figured things out. I have also been grateful to live in a state where districts support homeschooling families and our rights to make choices for our children have been respected and validated. I will continue to submit my documentation as required by the law, but I respectfully ask that you vote “no” on this bill so other families who are seeking to homeschool can confidently submit their intent and follow the law as it is written.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Edwards

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