

My name is Angelica Rodrigues and I am a homeschooling parent from Woonsocket. I am here today to respectfully oppose H.B. 8531.

I understand and agree that every child deserves to be safe, educated, and supported. I understand the state wants to protect children and prevent neglect or truancy. Those are important goals that all of us care about.

However, I believe this bill is too broad, too subjective, and could harm responsible homeschooling families like mine.

I decided to homeschool my daughter because she was struggling deeply in public school. She was falling behind in reading, struggling to remember what she was learning, and losing confidence in herself academically. She needed more one-on-one support, but the reality was that teachers simply did not have enough time to give individual attention to every child who needed it.

One moment that stayed with me was when I met with the principal and asked why nobody contacted me sooner about my daughter struggling. I wanted to understand why I was not informed earlier so I could help my child.

The response I received was that she believed many parents do not care enough, so there was little point in calling.

As a parent, hearing that was heartbreaking.

Because I did care. I cared enough to step in when my daughter was struggling. I cared enough to change her educational path completely so she could get the support she needed.

Since homeschooling, I have been able to work with my daughter at her pace, give her one-on-one attention, rebuild her confidence, and truly understand how she learns best. Homeschooling has not been about avoiding education. It has been about finally giving my child the education and support she was not receiving before.

That is why this bill concerns me so deeply.

Rhode Island already has stricter homeschool oversight than many other states. Families already submit homeschool plans and work with local districts for approval. H.B. 8531 goes further by giving school committees broad authority to decide whether homeschooling is in the “best interest of the child” and whether a parent has enough “competency” or “capacity” to teach.

Those terms are vague and subjective.

What one committee considers competent, another may not. A parent should not lose educational freedom because of personal opinions, bias, or disagreement with a family’s teaching style.

This bill shifts more power away from parents and toward government committees.

It risks treating responsible parents like they are guilty before doing anything wrong.

Many homeschooling parents are not certified teachers, but they are loving, involved, dedicated parents who know their children deeply — their learning styles, emotional needs, strengths, struggles, and what environment helps them succeed.

Parents should not have to prove they are worthy enough to educate their own children under unclear standards.

I am also concerned that this bill could create delays and barriers for families who need immediate educational changes for their children. Some children are struggling emotionally, academically, socially, or experiencing bullying, and delays in approval could force them to remain in situations that are not helping them succeed.

Protecting children is important, but laws should target abuse and neglect directly instead of creating fear and obstacles for all homeschooling families.

Most homeschool parents are not trying to hide their children from education. We are actively involved in our children's learning every single day.

For my family, homeschooling gave my daughter a chance to rebuild confidence, improve academically, and enjoy learning again.

I respectfully ask this committee to protect parental rights, educational flexibility, and responsible homeschooling families by opposing H.B. 8531.

Thank you for your time and consideration.