

Dear Lisa Cataldi and other Education Committee Members:

Regarding the proposed bill, H8531, I thought you might like some perspective from a homeschool family, who would be directly impacted by this bill. I am concerned about the vague, subjective language used in the bill, which implies that any reason at all could be given for a parent to be deemed “unfit” to teach their children. Section 16-19-2-b-1-iv (iv) The committee determines that the proposed primary instructor or instructor lacks the competency and the capacity necessary to provide instruction, including the capacity to maintain required attendance records and reporting. ) This phrasing removes constitutionally protected parental authority and gives it to Committee members who know neither our situation nor our children. We wish to keep our parental rights to decide the best way to educate our children.

For our family, homeschooling has been a wonderful experience. We love getting to educate our children at home. It means more time with them, the ability to tailor their education to their needs, and the privilege for us to get to watch our children thrive. Both of our kids struggled in school for a variety of reasons, ADHD being one of them. One of our children was struggling to be in a classroom all day and was developing more negative behaviors every week. We found the stress of trying to fit into the mold was not worth the cost of our mental health. At home, we can take movement breaks when we need to, we can get adequate sleep and sunshine, and we are thriving. We read a lot, we go on field trips with our family or homeschool group, and we sing a million songs to help us learn our subjects. When we decided our child needed one-on-one education, we were able to implement that change right away, because we have the freedom to choose what is best for our child. This bill could mean significant delays in a child’s opportunities to learn and flourish. We have had to change a lot of things about our lifestyle, but it has been worth it. All of us are happier, calmer, and loving the learning journey rather than battling it.

Many families in Rhode Island are choosing homeschool, and for a variety of reasons. Please ensure that freedom is preserved rather than taken away. Furthermore, homeschooling families have chosen that path (which includes many family sacrifices and accommodations) for a reason. Homeschooling is important to us. We have given up both income and time because to us it is essential. Further regulations in this area could force many families to relocate to other states, as we have already decided it is worth the sacrifice.

If Teachers’ Union lobbyists want to put Rhode Island children back in public schools, they should increase the quality of education, and ensure classrooms have the support and resources that they desperately need.

Homeschooling has been a life-changing gift for our family. Please help us keep our ability to teach our children by not passing bill H8531.