

## **Opposition to H.B. 8531**

### **Brittini Apuzzo - Parent/ Homeschool**

Dear Chair and Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

I am writing to urge you to oppose H.B. 8531.

While I believe this bill may have been introduced with the good intention of protecting children in unsafe situations, the language as proposed creates serious concerns for Rhode Island homeschool families. Rather than providing clear safeguards, H.B. 8531 gives school committees and superintendents broad, subjective authority over private family decisions without sufficient limits, standards, or recourse.

H.B. 8531 allows school committees to make determinations regarding a parent's "competency" and "capacity" to homeschool. These terms are not clearly defined and could be interpreted differently from district to district, or even from one committee member to another. That kind of discretion opens the door to personal bias, inconsistent enforcement, and unnecessary scrutiny of families who have done nothing wrong.

Every family that submits a Letter of Intent to homeschool could potentially be questioned under this bill. That places homeschool parents in a defensive position before there is any just cause. It also risks treating an entire community as suspect based on vague standards rather than specific evidence of harm or neglect.

H.B. 8531 also appears to allow a superintendent or school committee to determine whether a child should remain enrolled in public school and whether homeschooling is in the child's "best interest." Those are serious family decisions that belong primarily to parents, not to a school committee. If there is a genuine concern for a child's safety or welfare, the proper course is to report that concern to social services or law enforcement. School committees should not be placed in the role of investigators, child welfare officials, or law enforcement authorities.

This bill also creates a troubling unintended consequence. By giving superintendents and school committees greater power to block or delay homeschooling, it could allow districts to retain students for enrollment or budgetary reasons rather than educational or safety reasons. Even if that is not the intent of H.B. 8531, the bill creates the possibility for overreach and abuse of power.

The proposed legislation would not only fail to protect families from subjective treatment; it would make homeschool families more vulnerable to it. It grants significant authority over private families without clear restraint, due process protections, or a practical action plan for parents who are unfairly challenged.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose H.B. 8531. Rhode Island can and should protect children in unsafe situations, but that responsibility must be carried out

through the proper agencies and with clear legal standards. It should not come at the expense of parental rights, family privacy, and the lawful homeschool community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Brittini C.B. Apuzzo