

H5831 OPPOSED

To the Members of the House Education Committee,

I respectfully oppose House Bill H8531.

While protecting children and ensuring educational accountability are important goals, this bill grants overly broad discretionary authority to local school committees to deny or delay homeschooling approval based on subjective interpretations of “best interest,” “competency,” and “capacity.”

Many Rhode Island families turn to homeschooling because traditional school environments have failed to meet their child’s needs. Some children experience bullying, medical challenges, disabilities, mental health struggles, unsafe environments, or educational incompatibility within the public system. Under H8531, these same families could face additional barriers and scrutiny at the very moment they are seeking stability and support for their child.

The bill also creates concern by allowing prior truancy allegations or unresolved attendance disputes to become grounds for denying educational alternatives. Truancy itself is often a symptom of deeper issues, including health concerns, trauma, family hardship, or unmet educational needs. Families navigating these challenges should receive assistance and collaboration, not expanded bureaucratic obstacles.

Additionally, terms such as “competency” and “capacity” are insufficiently defined and could lead to inconsistent enforcement between districts. This opens the door to unequal treatment, bias, and unnecessary conflict between parents and school committees.

Rhode Island has long recognized the important role parents play in directing their children’s education. H8531 risks shifting homeschooling from a protected educational option into a permission-based system controlled by subjective local interpretation.

Families deserve transparency, fairness, and educational freedom without fear of arbitrary denial.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose H8531.

Respectfully submitted,  
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