

House Education Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly

May 18, 2026

Testimony in Opposition to HB8531

Dear Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Caitlin Ajax, and I am a working homeschool mom living in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Homeschooling has afforded our family (1) the time and space to develop close bonds and a joyful family culture, (2) the opportunity to delve deep into subjects of interest to my children, and (3) an opportunity to incorporate character-building, critical thinking and moral development into everyday curricular education.


Homeschooling is an extension of our parenting – a decision rooted firmly in what we believe is best for our children and their respective futures.

The House Education Committee (“Committee”) should **not** provide school committees the discretion to deny or defer homeschool applications on grounds of parents lacking “competency” or “capacity,” two terms which are deliberately undefined in the proposed bill. Further, the Committee should not provide an additional unnecessary layer of oversight on top of existing state homeschool regulation.

1. **Section 16-19-2(b)(1)(iv) provides overly-broad discretion to school committees to deny or defer approval of homeschool applications based on undefined terms.** There is no clarity on the meaning of “competency” or “capacity,” leaving such critical definitions open to the interpretation and discretion of individual school committees. This allows school committees to deny families the right to homeschool with zero guardrails and opens the door to inconsistent application and unjust results for countless families and children seeking to explore the many benefits and opportunities afforded by homeschooling.
2. **Section 16-19-2 already provides legal requirements (attendance and subjects of instruction) for Rhode Island homeschooling families.** Rhode Island already has robust reporting requirements compared to other states, and most homeschooling families comply with these requirements. This pass at additional oversight is completely unnecessary and serves to deny homeschooling as a choice and opportunity for families that do not meet the undefined standards of “competent” and/or having “capacity.” Further, it creates additional concern over state regulation that distracts from the important day-to-day work of thoughtful, intentional home education.

- 3. Child welfare concerns are the purview of child protection laws, not homeschool-specific regulations that disproportionately burden the law-abiding homeschool community.** If there are legitimate concerns about child abuse and neglect, irrespective of whether a child is homeschooled or attends public or private school, those concerns are best managed through child protection laws, DCYF and law enforcement investigations, not expanded laws for homeschooling families.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Caitlin Ajax". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Caitlin Ajax, Esq.