

My name is Christine Fix, and I am testifying in opposition to H8531 as a homeschooling parent.

My military family has homeschooled for the past eight years in several different states and under a variety of homeschooling laws, requirements, and educational models. In every place we have lived, we have found homeschool communities to be vibrant, diverse, supportive, and deeply enriching. When we settled in Rhode Island, we were grateful to find a welcoming environment with excellent opportunities for homeschooling families.

Across all of these experiences, the common thread has been dedicated parents who are deeply invested in their children's well-being and education. Homeschooling families work hard to tailor their children's learning to their individual academic, developmental, and personal needs.

Until now, I have never been in a position where the state believed that a school district had better insight than I do into the best way to educate my children. I chose to homeschool because I wanted my children to thrive, and they have. They have excelled academically, participated successfully in sports and extracurricular activities, and benefited from unique educational opportunities made possible through homeschooling. They have also performed very well on nationally normed standardized tests.

For these reasons, the idea that a local school district could deny parents the ability to homeschool their children is deeply concerning to me.

I understand that families choose homeschooling for many different reasons. Some lack confidence in their local public schools due to concerns about educational quality, bullying, violence, or insufficient resources. Others choose homeschooling simply because they value the opportunity to provide their children with a rich and individualized education. Some parents believe their children's needs may not be adequately met in an overextended educational system, and they choose homeschooling because it allows them to advocate for and support their children more directly and consistently.

I also recognize that there have been cases in which homeschooling has been misused and children have been harmed. Those situations are serious and should never be ignored. However, I do not believe those cases justify giving school districts the authority to determine whether homeschooling is in a child's best interest. The overwhelming majority of homeschooling families are providing safe, attentive, and effective educational environments for their children.

I respectfully urge the committee to oppose the passage of H8531. I believe the current law is sufficient. I do not believe school districts are the appropriate authority to decide whether homeschooling is in the best interest of a child. I do believe there are ways to encourage better cooperation and communication between parents and school districts while still preserving a parent's ability to direct their child's education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.