

From: Dana Carpenter danalcarpenter81@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Bill H8531 - Amended_Letter of Opposition
Date: May 18, 2026 at 9:48 PM
To: Houseeducation@rilegislature.gov

DC

House Committee on Education
State of Rhode Island General Assembly

May 18, 2026
TESTIMONY OPPOSING BILL H8531

Dear Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Dana Carpenter from the Conimicut/Hoxsie School District,

I am writing in opposition to H8531.

My family's story is shaped by complex and deeply personal circumstances. I have three children, two of whom are on the autism spectrum. My oldest daughter was nonverbal for many years. Through years of therapy, consistent home learning, and dedicated interventions, she slowly began bridging developmental gaps. She learned to speak words, communicate her needs, and eventually use short sentences. She developed the ability to participate in table lessons with focus and determination, and she was even beginning to read. As her communication improved, maladaptive behaviors became less frequent, and many of her frustrations and outbursts began to fade.

Like most parents, we eventually enrolled her in public school. Unfortunately, this marked the beginning of a steady regression in her skills, language, and overall progress. She stopped speaking in sentences, became overwhelmed with anxiety, and lost abilities she had previously mastered. Instead of building and maintaining meaningful skills, she appeared to rely on memorization and pattern recognition simply to get through the day. Her social connections diminished, while new aggressive and maladaptive behaviors began to emerge. She cried every morning before school and was frequently sick. Safety also became a concern, including instances of elopement in which a child was able to leave the premises.

Since beginning our homeschooling journey, she has once again started to regain lost ground. She is remastering old skills while continuing to build new ones. She now uses sentences again, and emerging conversational abilities are becoming more consistent. Most importantly, she has developed meaningful relationships with family, friends, and people who genuinely care about her well-being. Homeschooling allows her to learn in integrated environments while also giving her access to the sensory supports and outlets she needs to focus and regulate herself. We are able to create a balanced approach that combines therapy, meaningful socialization, and academics in a way that supports all aspects of her development.

The benefits extend beyond our children with special needs. Our typically developing son, who is not yet in kindergarten, has already tested at a first-grade level in math and a second-grade level in reading and language arts. Homeschooling allows us to provide the individualized education he needs to continue growing academically. Just as importantly, he has the opportunity to build strong, loving relationships with his sisters—relationships grounded in empathy, understanding, and daily connection that would not be possible if he spent 30 hours a week away from home.

Our family has unique and complex needs that can only truly be supported through a carefully structured homeschool environment with tailored curriculum and individualized learning approaches that balance both strengths and challenges.

As homeschooling parents, we strive to provide a secure, encouraging, and enriching learning environment where our children can become independent, compassionate, resilient, and capable individuals. We want to foster both a love of learning and a strong sense of connection, care, and community.

With all of this in mind, I believe H8531 lacks clear boundaries and definitions. I am deeply concerned that legislation with such broad and ambiguous language could have far-reaching consequences for families like mine and many others across Rhode Island. Rhode Island is already one of the most highly regulated states in the country for homeschooling, and I firmly believe the current laws are functioning effectively.

I respectfully urge you to protect the freedom of parents to educate their children in ways that best meet their individual needs. Please preserve our right to make educational decisions for our families and oppose H8531 as it is currently proposed.

Sincerely,

Dana Carpenter and Kurt Carpenter

On May 18, 2026, at 9:20 PM, Dana Carpenter <danalcarpenter81@gmail.com> wrote:

<Dana Carpenter_Bill H8531.pdf>