

homeowner and taxpayer
/ Good evening. My name is Joseph Kushner, IV. I am a resident of Hopkinton and I am opposed to House Bill H8531. /

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/ My wife and I have homeschooled all of our children / We currently have two graduates. Our oldest daughter just completed her Junior Year at Yale, double majoring in Mechanical Engineering and Music. Our second daughter completed her freshman year at Georgetown and is majoring in Nursing and minoring in Music. We have 5 additional school-aged children learning through homeschooling, ranging in ages from 4 to 17. / My wife has her Bachelor's degree in Astrophysics from Wellesley and I have earned a Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. / We are both active volunteers with Rhode Island 4-H for 10+ years, and I have also volunteered as a Cubmaster for Cub Scout Pack 2 Westerly since 2017 and a mentor for FIRST Robotics team 13181 "Free Wifi".

While there are several points in H8531 that have been mentioned today that should lead you to oppose this bill, I would like to highlight the "competency" condition for approval to homeschool, listed in 16-19-2, subsections b and c. / If I were to ask this committee today "Based on H8531, am I competent to homeschool my children?", you might be inclined to say, "Why, yes, Dr. Kushner, of course, you are". While I would appreciate hearing that answer, unfortunately, by H8531, the correct answer would be "Truthfully, Dr. Kushner, we don't know". This bill does not provide clarity on what constitutes "competency", including what constitutes the "demonstrated ability" standard in C-2 for a parent to be a competent instructor. / Therefore, the standard that would be given to school boards to determine parental competency to homeschool is both poorly defined and very subjective. This subjectivity is further worsened by the statement in the bill that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall be able to define "competent instructor", rather than in the bill itself. / This "demonstrated ability" standard would also be a significant, and unnecessary, hurdle to parents that wish to start their own homeschool journey for their family. This bill would assume parents are incompetent to teach their children unless the local school board is proven otherwise, completely reversing the current laws. / *or continue*

/ The changes proposed by the bill sponsors will add undue burden and significant uncertainty to the ability to homeschool in Rhode Island. It would not be helpful to my family, or the Rhode Island homeschool community. Please stand with us and oppose H8531. Thank you. /

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