

Lisa Cataldi

From: Kayla Thibodeau <kayla.thibodeau@enrichri.org>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 9:18 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: H8531 OPPOSED

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House Education Committee Clerk, Lisa Cataldi
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903
05/18/2026

Re: Testimony in of Opposition to House bill H8531

Dear Chairperson and members of the Education Committee:

I am Kayla Thibodeau from District 65 and I am part of EnrichRI Secular Homeschooling group. I oppose House bill H8531, AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE.

I oppose this bill because it is full of opaque language that would allow prejudice and overreach of a committee that does not have training nor understanding of these types of situations. We already have state law in place that has shown in the past to work. We also have state agencies, such as DCYF that deal with truancy's already, for all children. Not just those that are homeschooled. I feel time would be better spent in strengthening a system that could help all instead of ostracizing a community.

I chose to homeschool my child because traditional school was not an option. It wasn't for lack of trying. But like most things in life, school is not one size fits all. I saw a brilliant child who suffered with anxiety, turn into a petrified child who couldn't make it through the day without holding her teachers hand, she started having nightmares, and wetting the bed. We tried day after day, because we were told she would "get used to it". But she didn't. Instead she retreated into herself. I know that most kids can blossom in a school environment. But for children like mine, and the majority of those she's around at Enrich, a traditional school does not have the resources or environment conducive to learning and growing. Homeschool is the only choice for our children. Since starting, I've seen her become this shining light, that lights up a room, every time she walks into it. She's making friends and she's excited to learn. She' gained independence and skills she can take into adulthood, that she wasn't able to gain from school. It wasn't a choice made on a whim or overnight. It was one made out of an abundance of caution, with help from her counselor, and with lots a research and effort.

I urge you to truly consider the wording behind this bill. What does it seek to do? What could it actually do? To me it is incomplete and open to interpretation. Two things that are extremely dangerous when it comes to law. What makes a good teacher? What I might say, could be completely different from what you might say. Because what your child might need is completely different from what mine did. Should someone at the school department be able to decide what makes someone a competent instructor? Could there be another way? What is the goal here and is this actually getting us there?

I urge you to vote against bill H8531.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Kayla Thibodeau

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House District 65

5/18/2026