

May 19, 2026

Chair McNamara and the Honorable Members of the House Education Committee:

Re: Opposing Bill H 8531

Respecting Parental Rights and Supporting Home Education H 8531

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the proposed amendments to the compulsory attendance provisions, specifically the language that would authorize school committees to deny or defer approval of a proposed course of at-home instruction if there are pending truancy, educational neglect, or attendance-related charges.

Concerns About the Proposed Amendment

I respectfully urge you to oppose this amendment with me. While I understand the intent to ensure all children receive an adequate education, this proposal raises significant concerns about parental rights, due process, and the fair treatment of families who choose home education.

I also believe that Home Schooling is growing in Rhode Island and it's becoming an only choice for some children.

Special Education Law has been violating IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, ADA- American's with Disabilities Act and FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education for decades.

I wanted to remind the Committee about how SPEAR-Special Education Advocacy and Reform, tried to pass, An Ombudsman for Special Education Bill for 5 years, sponsored Sen-Murray and Rep-Carson.

I am also a mom advocate and help parents learn their parental rights under the law. I see many districts take advantage, blatantly disregard laws, and take advantage of parent's lack of understanding regarding, Special Education laws in place.

In my caregiver role, parents have reached out to me and asked me to oppose the passage of this bill.

Many of the parents are happy with homeschooling their children. The feedback was all positive.

Many of the parent's are homeschooling due to the school district's, inability to meet the needs of the child.

Other's, their child experienced bullying, isolation in quiet rooms, improper behavior restrains used, special services not providing FAPE and retaliation from the district.

News report:

<https://www.riaclu.org/news/complaint-alleges-special-education-children-unlawfully-restrained-west-warwick-north-kingstown/>

Remember...

This amendment could set a troubling precedent by allowing administrative bodies, to restrict a fundamental parental right—*the right to choose the mode of their child's education—on the basis of allegations rather than facts.*

Home education is a legal and respected option for many families, and parents should not face additional hurdles or stigmatization simply because of pending investigations or complaints.

We already have DCFY for children's safety....right?

However...

The DCYF system has failed in RI to comply with the Decent Decree' and now, RI has an Olmstead Committee, to make changes and hold parties accountable.

If systems in place are failing our children's needs, why should parents be subjected to H8531?

Lastly,

Due Process and Fairness

It is essential that our laws uphold the principles of due process and fairness. Educational decisions that impact a child's future should not be made based solely on allegations. I urge lawmakers to ensure that any action taken against a family's home education plan is based on clear evidence and after the family has had an opportunity to respond to any concerns.

Conclusion

In summary, while protecting children's right to an education is paramount, this amendment threatens to undermine parental rights and due process without providing meaningful safeguards. I respectfully request that you oppose this provision and instead seek solutions that protect children while respecting families and upholding the fundamental rights of parents.

Thank you and please join me in opposing this bill H 8531.

Sincerely,

Kerri Cassino ~ Mom Advocate ~ RI Lend Fellow and Group Leader of Families LeadRI Families Circle's

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