

Dear Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to Bill H8531.

As a homeschooling parent in Rhode Island, I believe our current homeschool laws are already effective and do not require additional regulation. Rhode Island families are already operating within an established legal framework that balances parental rights, educational accountability, and child welfare protections. Existing child protection laws apply to all families, including homeschoolers, and families who are neglectful or abusive can already be addressed under the current law.

H8531 introduces vague and subjective language such as “competency,” “capacity,” and “best interest.” These terms are not clearly defined and leave significant room for interpretation. Laws impacting families and children should rely on objective standards, not subjective opinions that could vary from district to district or person to person. This bill risks creating inconsistent decisions rather than fair and transparent processes.

Law-abiding homeschool families should not face additional oversight because of isolated cases. The overwhelming majority of homeschooling parents are deeply committed to the wellbeing and education of their children. Families should not have to prove they are “good enough” to homeschool without clear evidence of a problem.

Parents must remain the primary decision-makers in their children’s education because no one understands a child’s needs more completely than their own family.

For our family, homeschooling has been life-changing and necessary.

My two sons are internationally adopted and both have hearing loss. One of my sons is completely deaf, currently nonverbal, autistic, and diagnosed with global developmental delay. Both boys experienced developmental delays due to hearing loss and a lack of appropriate resources during their younger years before joining our family.

Homeschooling has allowed us to address not only academics, but also trauma, attachment, delayed social communication, speech development, and emotional regulation in ways that simply would not be possible in a traditional school setting. We utilize an IEP through our local public school system and work closely with professionals to ensure our children receive the services and support they need.

Our children participate in occupational therapy, speech therapy, feeding therapy, and other specialized services. If they were enrolled full-time in public school, nearly all remaining hours outside of school would be consumed by therapies alone, leaving little to no room for family life, rest, travel, or meaningful childhood experiences. Homeschooling gives us the flexibility to schedule therapies during daytime hours so our children can receive care from the right providers rather than being limited to overcrowded after-school availability.

Homeschooling also allows us to educate our children at a pace appropriate for their developmental needs while giving them opportunities to travel, experience the world, and learn

beyond the walls of a classroom. Our children can continue their education from anywhere without restrictions, missed work penalties, or unnecessary barriers.

For families like ours, delays or added hurdles to homeschooling are not minor inconveniences. They could directly harm children who need immediate educational changes, therapeutic support, or individualized care.

I also want to emphasize the seriousness of what legislation like this could mean for families like ours. Homeschooling is not simply a preference for our family — it is essential to meeting our children's needs. If additional restrictions or subjective approval standards made it impossible for us to homeschool effectively in Rhode Island, we would be forced to consider leaving the state entirely in order to continue providing our children with the education, therapies, flexibility, and support they require to thrive.

Please do not pass legislation that creates unnecessary barriers for responsible families who are already working tirelessly to meet the unique needs of their children.

I respectfully urge you to oppose H8531 and protect the rights of Rhode Island parents to direct the education and care of their children.

Sincerely,

Kylee Robinson
Westerly, Rhode Island