

House Education Committee
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

May 18, 2026

Re: Testimony in **opposition** to **House Bill H8531** titled “An Act Relating to Education - Compulsory Attendance”

Dear members of the House Education Committee,

I am **Laura Shea** from Johnston, Rhode Island and a homeschooling **parent** of two children. I am testifying in opposition to H8531.

As a former public school teacher, I believe deeply in the importance of educating children and in a parent’s right to choose how to best do this for their own child. Rhode Island’s current homeschool law is already working and does not need additional regulation. Existing child protection laws already apply to all families, including homeschoolers. In my role as a mandated reporter, I was often a first line of defense for children in unsafe situations.

This bill, H8531, uses vague and subjective language such as “competency,” “capacity,” and “best interest.” Without clear definitions, this opens the door to inconsistent and potentially unfair decisions about families like mine.

One of my children is neurodivergent, and homeschooling has allowed him to learn at his own pace in a way that supports a regulated nervous system, with minimal outside pressure. In a traditional school setting, the expectation to keep pace can lead to significant stress and anxiety for children like him. At home, he is able to engage in learning in a way that is responsive to his needs, and as a result, he is thriving academically, socially, and emotionally.

I am concerned that this bill could create barriers for families like mine, where flexibility and individualized approaches are essential to a child’s well-being and success. Parents should not have to prove they are “good enough” to homeschool without clear evidence of a problem.

I respectfully urge the committee to oppose H8531. Thank you.

Laura Shea