

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to you today to submit my formal testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 8531. I am a former professional educator, and a homeschool parent to my two young neurodivergent sons, and I will be standing before the committee tomorrow to testify. HB8531 threatens to dismantle the very educational sanctuary that has allowed my children to thrive.

My decision to pull my oldest son out of school during pre-K was a choice born out of heartbreak and necessity. In a traditional classroom, he was a child who simply did not conform. He was drowning, and as a mother, watching your child lose their spark—watching them feel like a failure before their life has even truly begun—is an agonizing pain. Drawing upon my professional background in special education, I knew with absolute certainty that he needed something radically different to learn, to grow, and to feel safe.

Homeschooling was not the easy path, but it was the necessary one. The current regulations in Rhode Island offer a beautiful, vital balance. They grant us the flexibility to meet our children exactly where they are—to tailor an education that honors their unique minds, builds their confidence, and protects their well-being. It is an environment where they are not just numbers in a system, but individuals being nurtured into their full potential.

HB8531 threatens to shatter that. By introducing rigid, unnecessary oversight and administrative restrictions, this bill suffocates the exact flexibility that saved my children. It places a heavy, bureaucratic burden on families who are already giving everything they have to give their children a chance at a bright future.

I implore the members of the committee to look beyond the policy and see the faces of the children whose lives hang in the balance. Do not strip away the educational freedom that has been a lifeline for my family and so many others across Rhode Island. I urge you with everything I have to vote against HB8531.

Thank you for your time and for ensuring my testimony is shared with the committee. I look forward to speaking directly to your hearts tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Leanne E. DeSimone
Narragansett, Rhode Island