

19 May 2026

Opposed to House Bill 8531

Dear Chairperson McNamara and members of the House Education Committee:

I have been both homeschooled and public schooled.

While homeschooled, I enjoyed time outdoors. My mother recognized I needed the freedom to get all my energy out before I could settle down and focus — every frazzled mom of a boy can relate. I accompanied my mother to the grocery store, learned how to grab the right things off the shelf, to distinguish labels correctly, and so on. I also would bring my schoolbooks with me to my father's computer repair business and work on my classes in the office. Alongside those studies, I also witnessed real-world business dealings — how to satisfy customers' concerns, diagnose problems based on scant end-user details, and so on. These are life skills that I remember to this day, not only because of what they were but who taught them to me. My parents guided me in how to live, and schooling was no exception. My textbooks could be rigorous and unyielding, but my parents knew me and how best I learned. If I needed help understanding a concept, my parents were there to help. They gently and lovingly corrected me. They took great pains to provide a quality education for me. On standardized tests, I placed at the same level as or above my peers. Because I was in a loving home, I could focus freely on my school with the support and encouragement of my parents.

While public schooled, I witnessed two boys, for their own amusement, ram a hockey stick between the legs of another, which lifted him off the ground before he fell to the floor in pain. I saw a boy expose another boy's genitals to a mixed group of students. Verbal sexual harassment went without reprimand. A classmate of mine now registers for life as a sex offender for groping a child. I was asked to be a pallbearer for a student who committed suicide, because someone noticed that I sat with him exactly once at lunch; it's possible they were scraping the bottom of the barrel to find anyone willing to carry him to his burial place. I was mocked publicly by teachers in class. I was pushed to the ground by a bully (who later went on to burn down an historic landmark). Another public schoolmate urged me to bring any weapons I had to a birthday party to which he was not invited. A few years after I graduated, a sophomore drew national attention by viciously murdering his innocent and unsuspecting friend, as well as his parents, with a knife while they slept. Despite being in a public school district consistently ranked highly in the state, this is what I experienced.

If a father or mother wants to remove his or her child from public school in order to homeschool, listen to them. Do not legislate them into oblivion. These degenerate acts of violence do not need to be forced onto my children before I am allowed to protect them.

This bill would permit school committees to deny homeschooling requests if *they* feel it's not in the child's best interest.

The public school system felt it was in my best interest to allow me to wade in an environment of sexual misconduct, discrimination, and violence. My parents felt it was in my best interest to protect me from that and to attend diligently to my learning.

My parents sacrificed *for me*.

My public school sacrificed *me*.

One does not triple the length of this section of the law in order to encourage *more* parents to homeschool their children — but *fewer*. Neither parents nor their children will be served well by introducing more difficult roadblocks to even getting *started* with homeschooling, let alone doing so while attempting to right the ship of their beloved children's education. This is to say nothing of the fundamental shift it requires in a family to take ownership of learning — which was commonplace for all of human history until a century ago.

Is there a problem with high rates of public school truancy? You might start by asking why so many children don't want to be there. Homeschooling is not the problem.

Reject House Bill 8531.

Sincerely,

Neal Shoemaker
West Warwick, RI