

The House Education Committee

May 18, 2026

Re: Testimony in Opposition to H8531

Dear House Education Committee:

I am Neeka Stanley from Lincoln, RI, District 45. I am writing as a parent and a social worker.

I oppose H8531, an amendment to RI State Statute (16-19-2) that concerns homeschooling. I oppose this bill because I am a homeschooling parent and deeply believe that parents know their children best. We chose to homeschool when our first child entered Kindergarten in the fall of 2020 since the idea of remote learning for such a young age broke our hearts. We continued to homeschool because we saw the value it brought to our family to have more time together, promote connections across age groups, have ample time to pursue individual interests and learn in ways that were individualized for our kids. Both of our kids are excellent readers, excelling in math and science, love history, and have ample social opportunities through our multiple group opportunities. They also have extra curricular type experiences as well (dance, gymnastics, girl scouts, church, etc).

The vast majority of parents have their children's best interests at heart, and current laws and DCYF policies are able to address those few cases where this is not the case. As a social worker and parent, of course I am concerned about those children where "homeschooling" is used as a cover for abuse or neglect, but this amendment is not the way to address that. Strengthen the existing support mechanisms for DCYF to help those families where concerns already exist, but subjecting every family to suspicion, investigation, requirements to justify themselves, and creating many hoops for parents to jump through is unnecessary.

Furthermore, this amendment has very vague and extremely concerning language in it. Who decides what a competent instructor with capacity means? Who gets to decide that? What does that even mean? Why should I have to prove myself when I have done nothing wrong? What does the "criminal and civil charges" mean? Does this refer to past convictions, or current charges that may or may not be founded? Will parents be blocked from providing what they believe is best for their children because of issues from the past, or for even engaging in current civil disobedience or other forms of protest that the government/school district might disagree with? The questions are endless about what the outcomes could be with this vague language.

Rhode Island has an incredible homeschool community where kids are excelling and the opportunities for exceptional learning abound. Homeschooling works in Rhode Island. Please vote against H8531 and protect our rights to give our children what we know is best for them.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,
Neeka Stanley
6 Darlington St
Manville, RI 02838
House District 45