

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to oppose H8531.

My family has homeschooled in Rhode Island for more than twenty years. Homeschooling has been one of the greatest blessings in our lives, allowing our children to receive a rich education tailored to their individual needs and to grow in a supportive and loving environment.

Our homeschooling journey began after a deeply troubling experience in public school. When my oldest daughter was in kindergarten, a first-grade teacher stated during a meeting with the principal present that she wanted to “slap that look off her face.” My daughter was only five years old. We were meeting because there was a first-grade student bullying my daughter outside of school. No disciplinary action was taken against the teacher, and this “professional” was assigned to be my daughter’s teacher the following year.

In that moment, I lost confidence that the school system, that I never thought to question prior, would protect and nurture my children. My husband and I made the decision to homeschool, and it was one of the best decisions we ever made for our family. My husband was a high school teacher for decades in another district and he agreed that he didn’t like what went on in public school hallways and classrooms. None of it aligned with what we wanted for our children.

While teachers, administrators, and educational professionals are often deeply dedicated and highly skilled, no system and no individual is without flaws. Parents know their children in a way that no institution ever can. Because children spend the majority of their waking hours in educational settings, parents should retain the fundamental right to decide where and how their children are educated.

Homeschooling provides families with an important option when they believe a different educational environment is better suited to their child’s academic, emotional, or developmental needs. That decision should remain with parents, not be subject to the discretionary approval of local school committees.

Through homeschooling, all of our children received an excellent education. We found a strong and supportive community through large state-wide groups and other homeschool families, and we never looked back.

In our experience, homeschooling did not limit our children’s opportunities to participate fully in the broader community. In addition to homeschool group activities and co-ops, our children were able to take part in public school sports teams and extracurricular activities alongside their peers. Time and again, the student leaders and team captains were homeschool students. My daughter won debate championships, and on educational field trips and museum visits, hosts frequently commented on how respectful, engaged, and well-behaved the homeschool students

were. These experiences demonstrate that homeschooling fosters not only strong academic achievement, but also leadership, character, and meaningful involvement in the community.

This bill changes homeschooling from a right that parents can exercise under Rhode Island law into a privilege that must be approved by local school committees. Parents who are acting in good faith could be forced to prove their competency and wait for permission to educate their own children.

H8531 would give school committees the authority to deny or defer homeschooling in certain circumstances. While this bill may be well-intentioned, it places additional barriers between families and their ability to choose the educational path that is best for their children.

For many families, homeschooling is not an attempt to avoid accountability—it is a thoughtful and intentional decision made, often with great financial sacrifice, in the best interest of their children. Parents know their children best and should retain the right to direct their education without unnecessary government interference.

Please protect the rights of Rhode Island families to homeschool and vote against H8531.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tara Anderson
Woonsocket, Rhode Island