

I'm Tara Shoemaker. I'm a homeschooling mother and former private school teacher from West Warwick. I strongly oppose H.8531.

My children are thriving academically. But I also homeschool because I know firsthand what some children endure in ordinary school environments. *both as a student + a teacher in this state.*

I went to a good public school. I earned a 34 on my ACT, was a National Merit Scholar, and was at the top of my class. By every measure, my education was successful. And yet, for me, it was thirteen years of misery.

I was often harassed. My classmates pulled my hair, stuffed bugs down my clothes, and made rude and sexual comments about me. One girl peered into my bathroom stall and mocked my hygiene. One boy exposed himself to my class when I was only six years old. The bullying continued until the day I graduated.

In any workplace, this behavior would be grounds for firing. My teachers treated it as a normal, regrettable part of growing up. *This is not rare. It happens in good schools.*

This is why I oppose this bill.

H.8531's broad language allows school committees to decide if homeschooling is in the "best interest" of a child. But the officials in charge of my education thought **that** school was in my best interest. They were wrong.

Parents should not need state permission to remove their children from environments that are successful on paper but harmful in reality. Children should not be forced to remain in harmful environments to satisfy a lengthy bureaucratic process.

Rhode Island already has strong laws to protect children from abuse and neglect. This bill does not solve a demonstrated problem. It simply gives government officials broader authority to second-guess good parents.

My children do not live with the fear and humiliation that shaped my school experience.

I respectfully urge you to reject H.8531. Thank you.

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