

## Lisa Cataldi

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**From:** Stephanie Meuse <stephanie.s.meuse@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 9:22 PM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Cc:** Rep. Ranglin-Vassell, Marcia R.  
**Subject:** Stephanie Meuse for Bill 5936

Hi,

My name is Stephanie Meuse, an East Providence resident, organizer behind Safe Return to School RI and 4th grade teacher in Central Falls. I am writing today in support of House Bill 5936 - The Trauma Informed Schools Act.

In 2017, I had the pleasure of hearing Social Justice & Educational Expert Dr. Jeff Duncan Andrade address Rhode Island teachers from across the state as the keynote speaker at the Learning Community's Teaching Studio's Educators Institute. The energy in the room listening to him talk about the impact of community, structural, racialized and socioeconomic trauma on the brain and how it appears in the classroom was palpable.

Duncan founded a school called and often refers to Tupac Shakur's The Rose That Grew From Concrete - a metaphor he uses for the miracle of learning that happens, in spite of everything, in our classrooms, every single day. He says, "the concrete is real and it's multilayered and it's toxic. If schools are not aware of the concrete and that students are showing up with damaged petals, then we can't see those roses."

With the pandemic behind us, with the rising rates of gun violence in our city, with structural and social racism and local economic crises - so many students in Rhode Island are coming to school with ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) - foundational experiences that Dr. Duncan Andrade argues have a huge impact on learning and which research has found can cause "complex post-traumatic stress disorder." The kind of PTSD people have when toxic stress in their lives is ongoing and unresolved.

Trauma informed practices in school buildings are key to meeting students where they are and beginning to get them what they need to create classroom environments that are conducive to learning.

The Johns Hopkins report saw clear cracks in the foundations of our capital's schools cultures - between students and adults, between adults, between students. Trauma informed practices are a research based way forward to something more positive.

I hope you will strongly consider voting in favor of passing House Bill 5936 this afternoon.

Thank you,  
Stephanie Meuse