

April 28, 2025

Dear RI Elected Officials:

My name is Michelle Steever and **I am writing in support of House Bill 5749 - The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act.** I have worked in public schools as a school librarian since 2002. I am an alumna of URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Science and was the RIDE School Librarian of the Year in 2021.

Many Rhode Island school districts will receive less-than-predicted state funding for the 2025-2026 school year. I work in East Greenwich, one of the districts with a state budget shortfall of \$800K+. The East Greenwich School budget is already tight: Our per pupil expenditure is in the bottom third of the state. Our teacher salaries are also in the bottom third of the state. What's left to cut from a lean budget are programs and teacher positions. The East Greenwich School Committee has proposed to eliminate a school librarian and art teacher, three paraprofessionals and the entire facilities budget for the district.

When school districts have an unexpected dip in state funding; Students lose. Like so many school districts, East Greenwich doesn't have additional monies to cover unexpected state budget shortfalls. Students will lose the opportunity to learn critical information literacy skills from a full time librarian. Students will lose the opportunity to practice visual expression skills, observation and communication skills in art class. Similar programmatic cuts will occur in every district not receiving level state funding. Programs like library, art and music do not have standardized testing, and are seen as expendable when budgets fall short. These are vital programs that teach students the skills needed to successfully maneuver through and make sense of their visually rich and information dense lives in order to become informed citizens.

Decades of research show a correlation between schools with full time certified school librarians and English language arts test scores, graduation rates, and enjoyment in learning. According to the article [Investing in School Libraries and Librarians To Improve Literacy Outcomes](#) (Otero Martinez, 2024), more than 50 years of research show that students with access to well-resourced school libraries **with certified school librarians** consistently perform better academically and score higher on standardized assessments. School Librarians teach media and information literacy skills, increasingly important skills in an age of misinformation and disinformation.

We need you to help ease the pain school districts feel when there is a 2% or greater reduction in state aid by increasing the stabilization fund from 50% to 75%. We need you to ensure that our students do not lose.

Please vote to support H5749. Thank you for your consideration.



Michelle Steever
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