

Brian Mehan

Vice Chairperson, Board of Trustees, the French American School of Rhode Island

House Bill No. 6236, *An Act Relating to Education -- Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits.*

Testifying In Opposition

Date: 5/20/2025

To:

Rhode Island House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill No. 6236

Dear Representative Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to respectfully express my **strong opposition to House Bill No. 6236, *An Act Relating to Education -- Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits.***

This proposed legislation would significantly restrict access to school transportation for students attending non-public schools outside their local city or town boundaries. Such a change would **disproportionately harm students attending smaller and less-funded private institutions**, many of which serve unique educational missions that are not available in traditional public school settings.

One such school is the **French American School of Rhode Island (FASRI)**, located in Providence. FASRI is the **only school in the state offering a full bilingual immersion curriculum in both French and English**—a program that supports not only language acquisition but also cognitive development, global awareness, and cultural competency. Families from across Rhode Island—including communities well beyond Providence—choose this school because of its singular mission and academic rigor.

Many of these families rely on state-supported transportation to access this specialized education. The enactment of H6236 would **create an inequitable burden on working families** who do not have the means to independently arrange transportation, potentially forcing students out of the only school equipped to meet their educational needs.

As a taxpayer and engaged member of the school community, I urge the Committee to consider the **unintended consequences** of this bill on educational diversity, equal access, and the strength of Rhode Island's independent school sector. Rather than narrowing access, we should be working to **ensure that every child, regardless of zip code, has the ability to attend a school that best meets their individual learning needs.**

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued service to the people of Rhode Island.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Mehan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sincerely,
Brian Mehan