

Verbal Testimony on House Bill No. 6236

Rhode Island State House – House Finance Committee

Good afternoon, Chairperson and members of the House Finance Committee, and members of the public.

My name is Marci Mitchell, the director of marketing and strategic communications at Lincoln School in Providence.

Since 1884, Lincoln School has been a vital part of Rhode Island's educational landscape, giving girls the skills, confidence, and opportunities to lead in whatever path they choose. As the only Quaker girls' school in the country, Lincoln offers a singular experience—one where girls take center stage—developing the voice and self-assurance to step into leadership roles.

I am here today along with representatives from other school members of the ISARI, the Independent School Association of Rhode Island, to respectfully voice my opposition to House Bill No. 6236. While this bill may appear to focus narrowly on the logistics of school bus transportation, its broader implications could significantly restrict access to education for many Rhode Island families—especially those who rely on school choice to ensure their children receive the education that best fits their needs.

Let me be clear: families who choose independent or private schools are not exclusively part of the top 1%. This is a common misconception. In fact, a substantial percentage of students at independent schools like Lincoln School receive financial assistance—often more than 40%. These families represent a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and are seeking the best educational environment for their children. School choice is not a luxury; it is often a lifeline.

We are simply asking for the continued support that has existed in this program since its inception, helping to ensure equitable access to education—regardless of where a family lives or which school best supports their child.

If this bill moves forward, the real impact will be felt not in transportation schedules, but in diminished access, disrupted learning, and greater inequity. I urge you to consider the broader implications for educational opportunity in Rhode Island and vote no on House Bill 6236.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration.