

Testimony in Favor of H7888, the School Libraries Act

Submitted by Peter Quesnel

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My name is Peter Quesnel, and I am a recently retired school library media specialist and resident of Providence. I thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee today in favor of H7888.

I felt the need to introduce this legislation after years of advocating for school libraries and witnessing years of setbacks for libraries.

The value of school libraries is clearly evident as we will hear tonight:

- Research across the decades and across the states consistently concluding that adequately stocked and staffed school libraries correspond with higher student performance on standardized tests.
- Research linking the availability of diverse reading materials contributing to reading achievement.
- School librarians teaching essential research, information and media literacy skills and instilling a love of reading and learning.
- Students testifying to their love of libraries, their need to have libraries as safe spaces to learn, read, be themselves and be empowered.
- Teachers testifying to their reliance on library resources and school librarians as essential, collaborative partners.

The Rhode Island Department of Education Basic Education Plan, known as the BEP, affirms the value of libraries. The BEP instructs local school districts to provide "high quality library media programs" that include books, multimedia materials, and information technology among other resources, that are **accessible** to all students, that enhance the reading curriculum, and that provide instruction on the essential skills of information literacy, independent learning and social responsibility. This is what our state *requires* of local education authorities.

And in many schools, that is what is happening. But, sadly, not everywhere. In fact, often decisions are made that result in diminished or