

From: Michelle Lefort <michelle.lefort@gmail.com>
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To: SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>
Subject: written testimony for S 2078

Good morning.

I am writing today in support of the Save RI School Libraries Act. As a mother of three and Barrington, RI resident, I have had the tremendous good fortune to see the positive impact of school libraries and librarians on students from elementary through high school.

As my children moved through the school system, I chose to volunteer in our school libraries. I would help to shelve books or check books out to eager readers, while getting a front row seat to the work of the school librarians. What I witnessed were professional educators, equipping students with the tools they need to be academically and personally successful.

There were lessons designed to help students to navigate a difficult digital landscape and think critically about the links they click or sources of information they trust. Even as an adult, I was able to take away important information from these lessons! Students were taught to look closely and evaluate carefully, tools that are essential to them as learners but also as citizens of our communities.

While I was always impressed by the lessons that prepared students for academic and professional success in an increasingly dense media landscape, I also witnessed school librarians fostering a love of reading. I watched as they supported reluctant readers, and instilled confidence in their reading choices by celebrating each book. I saw carefully designed book displays that gave spaces for struggling students to pick up books that spoke to them. As a parent, I participated in book clubs hosted by the school librarians, where my family was able to share the joy of a good story with a community of readers. These moments showed me the power of story to reach children, and provide them with a safe space to discuss difficult topics.

I am profoundly grateful to my school librarians. My children are better students and I have a better relationship with them, thanks to the role of school librarians in our lives. Every school in RI should have a library staffed with a trained librarian. They are the heart of every school, the space where all students can find their own place at their own pace and the foundation for an educated and compassionate community.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lefort

9 Pine Top Rd.

Barrington, RI 02806