

My name is Dr. Marjorie Cramer. I am a plastic surgeon and am here today to express my strong support for HB 5423.

The practice of dissection was introduced in 1920s in the United States. I grew up in England, which did not require dissection. Both of my daughters went to a school that did not require dissection and so I have not had to deal with this issue personally. I hope that by the time my grandchildren are ready for school they also will be able to avoid this outmoded practice. It is possible to graduate from college and medical school without ever having dissected an animal. Surgeons can learn to do surgery and pilots can learn to fly planes using computer simulations, so it must be possible for children to learn about science using them. The fact these programs can be used over and over, reduces the cost of science materials.

Even if teachers present dissection as simply cutting up an already dead animal, it doesn't take very much imagination for a child to understand that the dead animal had been killed somewhere along the way. This can be extremely distressing to a child's sense of reverence for life. Some of these children will grow up to be doctors. In order to treat patients, physicians need to nurture their respect for life rather than suppress or subvert it.

The psychological stress of being forced to do something which is opposed to one's ethical standards can produce sequelae, ranging from nightmares to depression. I had to do dissection in college but I continued as a science major in spite of rather than because of having to dissect. I believe that dissection interfered substantially with my ability to learn. It was my excellent science teachers who awoke the passion for science in me and challenged me. Many promising students have been turned away from a medical or scientific career because they decided not to take a course in which dissection was required. I believe that any child who has an ethical objection to the practice must be accommodated in our schools. We owe to our children the right to grow emotionally as well as physically.

Teachers often believe that children refuse to do dissection simply because they are squeamish, and they and other students may harass them for the same reason. No child should be required to sustain such misunderstanding and abuse in order to acquire knowledge which can better be obtained in other ways. As a surgeon who performed surgery daily for 30 years, I believe I can safely say that I am a model of the non-squeamish.

I respectfully urge you to vote for HB 5423.

Thank you