

Testimony of Ana Paulina Morrón in Support of H.B. 5530

Representative Urban, Senator Musto, Representative Fawcett, and distinguished Members of the Select Committee on Children:

My name is Ana Paulina Morrón and I am a student at Yale Divinity School. I urge you to support H.B. 5530, "An Act Concerning Dissection Choice." In my opinion, the issue at stake has very little to do with dissection itself. Instead, the issue is the right of our young citizens to act in accordance with their value systems.

Sincerely held moral or religious beliefs rise above the level of mere preference. The right of individuals to assert such beliefs is fundamental to a free society. Given this, the State cannot allow the expression of moral beliefs to be subject to the whims of a teacher, a principal, or a school board. While most educators willingly provide alternative assignments, the issue of freedom of conscience is so worthy of protection that it must not be left to individual discretion.

Education is about fostering a learning environment in which students can remain true to themselves. We need to send our children the message that it is okay to uphold their values, and that doing so does not have to conflict with their scientific interests. For this reason, it is important to protect access to alternatives to dissection for every student in Connecticut.

I respectfully request that the Committee consider adding a provision to require that teachers inform their students of the right to conscientiously object to performing dissections. Without such a provision, students might not feel safe voicing their personal opposition or might not realize that they have the right to an alternative assignment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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