

Greetings Committee Members.

My name is Dr. Regina Milano. I am here today to support HB 5530. I have been a Biology teacher for 14 years and I recently completed my doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. My dissertation is entitled, "Biology Teachers' Dissection Practices and the Influences That Lead to Their Adoption: An Exploratory Research". I decided to research this topic because controversy over this issue has continued to be a theme each year of my learning and teaching tenure.

As a student, I was opposed to dissection for ethical reasons. Refusing to dissect altered the course of my education and rather than pursuing pre-veterinary studies, I studied Environmental Biology. Had the alternatives to dissection being used in Europe in veterinary universities been made known to me then, I would have pursued a career in medicine. Yet, rather than being given the option to opt-out of dissection, I received low marks for refusing to participate and avoided courses that required dissection. When I became a teacher, I was committed to engaging my students in ethical discussions about dissection as a matter of full disclosure. I was reprimanded for doing so and despite a full presentation I prepared for the Superintendent, the discussion was shut down. I chose to leave my job because I refused to be part of this indoctrination process which held that having students cut into creatures' bodies was sound education, but discussing the idea that these animals were once living, feeling beings was not. Unfortunately, this year still, I endured intimidation that violated my own right to conscientiously object to dissection, despite my expertise in this area and sound arguments for the use of alternatives.

In my experience, many students endure a great deal of discomfort and inner conflict at the prospect of cutting into an animal because of the way they find it contradictory to the ways in which animals are presented in grade school and at home. The nature of the dissection process, its invasiveness and tangibility, immerses the student physically, mentally and psychologically in a way that many find violating, especially where pithing is concerned, an type of dissection in which the student must kill or maim the creature prior to cutting it open. Increasing diversity in schools leads to inevitable dilemmas and choices regarding dissection. Although some students are viscerally repulsed by dissection, others object to the practice based on values, morals and ideology (Bowd & Shapiro, 1993; Downie & Meadows, 1995; Grace & Ratcliffe, 2002; Greaves, Stanisstreet, Boyes & Williams, 1993; Kormondy, 1990; Langley, 1991; Singer, 1975). Refusal for these reasons represents a constitutional right under the first amendment, that we in public education are bound ethically to ensure. Yet, rather than ensuring students' rights, my study reveals that 71.9% of teachers continue to irresponsibly thrust upon their students, notions of the necessity of dissection that is only rooted in their own antiquated experiences as students and engrained speciesist ideologies. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews reveal abuses in classrooms, such as intimidating students into dissecting, defying parents' directives to allow their child to refrain from dissecting, and allowing students to leave school with the mutilated specimens that once breathed life. It is a lesson devoid of compassion and I dare to say a deliberate lesson of discompassion in a time when alternatives have been proven to be as, if not more effective than traditional dissection. To further complicate matters, teachers experience anxiety over addressing CT State standards, where dissection is not even found because dissection, with its inspect, dissect, identify and memorize protocol, does not meet inquiry-based standards for which we strive.

Although your purpose here is to consider the impact dissection may have on students it cannot be denied that the victimized animals also have a vested interest in this argument, not to be tortured by being drowned in formaldehyde, or being injected with killing dyes while strapped by all fours on their backs, fully aware. They have an interest in not being pulled from their mothers' wombs prematurely, or gassed because the utter disregard of supposedly higher species has led them to kill shelters that for lack of funding sell these forgotten animals into experimentation and dissection, often while alive and in full good health. If we are civilized at all, we must consider the voiceless victims, especially when in education we have to only opportunity, but an imperative to act on justice.

If anyone should take an interest in reading my manuscript, I have brought it here today. It can be mailed back to me once you have completed your research.

Sincerely, Dr. Regina Milano 22 Forest Hills Road, West Haven, CT 06516 (203)506-2206.