

Dear Honorable Members of the Select Committee on Children:

As a high school teacher in the Connecticut public school system, I would like to address the issue of dissection and student choice. Creating a more humane society begins with children. I believe that the practice of dissection desensitizes young people to the suffering of living things. Dissected animals are viewed as objects, and not as sentient, feeling beings. I have observed callous and disrespectful behavior among some students who participate in this activity - other teachers have observed the same attitude and behavior.

I am currently the faculty advisor for the Animal Welfare Group at East Lyme High School. The first issue that my students chose to address was the elimination of dissection in certain biology classes. These students gathered several pages of student signatures on a petition against dissection at the high school. Together with this petition, they made a presentation to the science department regarding the cruelty of dissection and the effectiveness of alternative models and computer programs. These students are extremely passionate about this issue, which they regard as a question of morality.

I have found that many students not only oppose dissection, they refuse to enroll in science courses because of the moral dilemma this poses for them. Their avoidance of science is a great loss to society in general. What talent is being lost because these students refuse to engage in an activity that they feel is cruel and unnecessary? Even the National Science Teachers Association and the National Association of Biology Teachers support dissection choice in schools.

Our world is filled with enough pain and suffering. If we are to create a better future for ourselves, we need to teach our young people that all life is precious and must be respected. Let us follow the lead of our neighbors - New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island - and give our students the freedom of choice.

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