

From: elizabeth dilernia [mailto:elizabeth74@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 6:24 PM
To: Giannaros, Elizabeth
Subject: Testimony in Support of HB5530

My name is Elizabeth DiLernia. I am writing to express my support for HB5530, which would give CT students choice as to whether or not they dissect. I have been a biology teacher for 11 years in CT, and have conducted countless dissections. I have seen first hand the distress that it causes certain students and I have personally made the decision to allow alternative assignments for those who morally, ethically, religiously, or otherwise, oppose dissections.

I however, am in the minority. Each year, fellow teaching peers demand that all of their students dissect, and proceed to fail them (for that activity) if they do not. Worse, I have seen students advised not to take entire, full year biology classes if they were not prepared to dissect, thereby denying them equal opportunity to learn. I think it is deplorable that students can miss out on so many valuable learning experiences only because they are asking for a more humane alternative to a few activities. I can tell you from experience that the alternatives for dissection, such as paper labs, online, and interactive activities are just as good, if not better for those students opting out and I have had great success using them. No student should be denied opportunity for learning in science because they have taken a strong ethical or religious stance.

In closing, I feel it is crucially important to give students who decline dissections in favor of comparable, humane alternatives, the legal protections they clearly need, since there are so many teachers who do not respect the beliefs of those students. Afterall, we are legally bound to modify the curriculum continually for students both gifted and special needs, I see no difference here. Thank you for your time.

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