

From: Ivanle@aol.com [mailto:Ivanle@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 2:55 PM
To: Giannaros, Elizabeth
Subject: HB5530

February 15, 2011

Dear Select Committee on Children,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB5530, An Act Concerning Dissection Choice. This bill would allow students in Connecticut's schools to opt out of classroom dissection and to be provided with the opportunity to learn the same course material in a way that does not use animals or violate their convictions.

As someone who has cared for and treated animals in a professional capacity as a veterinarian for many years, I support this bill for numerous reasons.

First, there is no scientific justification for the required dissection of animals to understand principles of human and animal anatomy and physiology in middle and high school. In fact, dissection of animal bodies is not necessary even at the highest levels of human medicine (95% of medical schools do not use any animals to train medical students) and it is not always included even in veterinary school curricula. Medical and veterinary schools often employ tools such as video, plastic models, simulation models, computer programs, and still images to convey course content. Such tools are available for a range of education levels and offer a range of educational, ethical and economic benefits.

Anatomy—even surgery—can be, and frequently is, taught without dissecting or in any way harming animals. Simply put there is nothing that dissection offers that cannot be effectively taught with teaching tools that do not require that animals be killed or taken from the wild.

Second, forcing a student to participate in an unnecessary activity which he or she finds deeply objectionable is disrespectful to the student and it communicates to students that their feelings of compassion are without merit. In my experience, science education can and should promote a reverence for life in students. Dissection—particularly when forced on someone—undercuts notions of respect that science may otherwise be able to promote.

Third, forcing dissection on students is apt to alienate them from the sciences and close off promising career paths. In my particular profession—veterinary medicine—many people are motivated by a genuine desire to help care for animals. Of course, as a veterinarian, caring for animals requires rigorous scientific training. If science becomes associated with cruelty toward animals or appears to require ignoring ones ethical or religious convictions, many people will be compelled to forego further scientific education. This would be a great tragedy in part because it can be so easily avoided.

Passing HB5530 will benefit students, animals, and even science itself here in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Joan Poster, VMD, PhD

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