

TO: The Members of the Committee on Children

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Hello. I am Pam Lucashu from Durham CT, and I'm here to state my opposition to SB 169 and SB 5567.

These bills require that local and regional boards of education—and health care providers—assess every child for social, emotional, behavioral and mental health to ensure the delivery of necessary services and interventions, and to develop a comprehensive plan of assessment.

I oppose Bills 169 and 5567 because the comprehensive and invasive evaluations would constitute an unwarranted invasion of family privacy. Children within the public school system have many eyes upon them, attuned to problems they deal with every day. Anyone who has taken their child to a pediatrician in the past 15 years knows that doctors routinely ask assessment type questions at a general physical. Parents know their children best; they are motivated to seek assistance and are often frustrated in acquiring adequate services for their children.

Mandating mental health assessments for every child is needlessly intrusive.

It appears that this bill was drafted – along with others in this legislative session- to address the concerns raised after the Newtown murders concerning enhancement of mental health services.

Assessment, however, does not serve that purpose. According to news reports, Adam Lanza did not lack for assessment. It is unclear, however, if Adam's family had adequate access to services or residential placement.

Mandatory, universal assessment places an undue burden on the school system and health care providers, would be costly to administer, and is likely to have unintended consequences.

I ask you to re-focus your efforts to streamline the process for parents to access the myriad of services already in place. I also urge any of you who will review similar bills in other committees to consider increasing access to services and increasing funding for residential placement.

Thank you.