

Horsky SB 374

March 6, 2013

As a parent who homeschooled her two children from the time my husband and I removed them from parochial school at ages 11 and 9 years old, I feel that I must comment on Senate Bill 374.

We pulled our children out of school because my 6th grader was being bullied. My daughters are now well-adjusted adults who graduated from Colgate University in Hamilton, NY and St. Michael's College in Colchester, VT.

Homeschooling was not our only option. We called other parochial schools in our city and considered public school. However, there were no openings in the parochial schools at that time and since my daughter's self-esteem was very low, I thought she might be even more likely to be teased in a public school environment. The cost of local private schools was prohibitive. If we left our daughter in that damaging school environment (where she went to school daily with an upset stomach) with an administration that seemed unable to solve the problem, she most likely would have continued (at least through 8th grade) to be one of those bullied adolescents who often end up taking some type of desperate measure to end their anxiety. Thank God for the opportunity to homeschool our children, who by any measure, are considered successful, mentally healthy adults today. Imagine a very bright 11 year old with low self-esteem discovering that she was being tested regarding her behavioral health. The poor kid was already stressed out to the max. Very soon after beginning homeschooling, she recaptured her happy, outgoing personality, became an even more avid reader and an accomplished equestrian.

The National Home Education Research Institute(NHERI) published research facts on homeschooling on January 11, 2011. Here are a couple of their findings but please "google" NHERI to read more.

- The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development. Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
- Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. They are commonly involved in activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work.

These do not appear to be factors that would warrant the authorization for the state to conduct regular social services investigations of homeschooling families without any basis to do so.

Here are a couple of questions that you should consider answering.

Why would the state presume that behavioral problems exist with public school children and homeschool children but not private and parochial school children?

What additional help will be given to children with Asperger syndrome since this bill has obviously been proposed because of Adam Lanza?

Once diagnosed with a behavioral problem, how much will the state be allowed to intervene without permission from the child's parents?

If implemented, will the state pay for the behavioral testing that will be required versus making parents take on this burden? Homeschooling parents already take on the expense of education for their children, spend more time with their children than parents of traditionally schooled kids and most likely know if their children are mentally, emotionally, and socially healthy. If they are very sure that they are healthy, why should they be required to have their children tested and then be required to pay for that testing?

I have not been outspoken about the right to homeschool your children. However, I believe deep in my heart that the route we took was absolutely the best choice for the education of our children. Both of our daughters have told us that they would love to have the opportunity to homeschool their own children someday- the ultimate confirmation that we did the right thing. Homeschooling parents are not lazy, uninterested people when it comes to their children. Putting them on a bus every day is an easier option than having them with you all day. Parents who choose to homeschool their kids do it because they believe that they can do a better job of educating them than by using the other options available to them. The statistics show that they are usually right. Please do not target the most successful educational "system" in our country. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Kathy Horsky
CT resident