

Oberg: SB 374

Dear Senators and Representatives:

As a concerned Connecticut Citizen and Parent, I would like to submit my own observations and testimony against the proposed Bill No. 374. This testimony may be read at the March 8 public hearing.

S.B. No. 374 is an unjust and uncalled-for invasion of the rights of parents and families with children in public and private schools, as well as home-school families. It also is a waste of tax payers dollars at a time when the state cannot balance its own budget and certainly can not afford to add on the additional layers of bureaucracy required to monitor this, just for spendings sake.

The bill would require parents to submit their children to psychological evaluation by an unspecified and state-selected representative of the health profession. This far over-reaches the purpose of the State Board of Education, which is to provide an equal, that is public, education to children, not to oversee their psychological health. Requiring children to undergo these invasive evaluations violates the parental right to monitor to which ideologies regarding healthcare their children are exposed at young ages. The materials used and questions asked during these evaluations may in fact violate the conscience of the parents whose children are being examined. Is the goal of the State to find cause to remove a child from the parents care because the "state evaluator" disagrees with a parents opinions, ideologies, or religious training/views expressed to a child during their upbringing? Who bears the cost of the evaluations and eventual challenges in court by the parents to the evaluation which has now labeled thier child, possibly for life?

The bill is vague that it leaves open-ended the question of to whom access to the results of these evaluations would be given. How long will the resulting files be maintained (by the state) and under what level of security? The phrase "the results of which shall be disclosed only to the child's parent or guardian", in no way protects the family from disclosure of confidential medical information to other state agencies should the state-appointed physician deem it necessary.

The state has no right to assume a parental role in our children's lives and is both ill-equipped and underfunded to do so. It is the parents, the churches, and the grassroots community of Connecticut that are most able to offer support, oversight, and correction of behavioral and mental health issues. They are our first line of defense in evaluating the health of our children. We do not need another layer of government sponsored family interference intended more to create new jobs than to identify potential problems.

In short, this bill contains a poorly defined requirements that violate parents' rights as the primary educators and guardians of their children. While I commend the public school system for providing services to previously diagnosed children with special needs, the state should leave the question of diagnoses to the parents and their freely chosen healthcare professionals.

Thank you.
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Stratford, CT.