

Pott SB 374

To the distinguished members of the Committee on Public Health:

I wish to voice my concern for Bill 374, "An Act Requiring Behavioral Health Assessments for Children." This bill is unnecessarily invasive in its scope, considering that it seeks to test *every* homeschooled and public school child, and therefore the vast majority of affected children would never have shown any need for intervention. I liken this to a pediatrician subjecting a child to an invasive procedure in search of an illness for which the child has displayed no symptoms. No parent would stand for that. And would we ever approve of such sweeping checks for adults? Who can conceive of door-to-door Alzheimer's checks for seniors, or mandating our over-50 population to retake their driver's tests? Bill 374 should be viewed as equally problematic.

In addition, these mass assessments could not be implemented effectively, and would instead label many children with problems that they do not own. I will give you an example from my home: my son was assessed by a neuropsychologist at the age of 6, at which time his IQ was found to be in what is termed the "profoundly gifted" range. It has been widely documented that such children display behavioral traits that are normal for them, but different from "neuro-typical" children. For example, the higher the IQ, the less likely the child is willing to jump through hoops, no matter how much an adult wants him to. If someone asks my son a question that he thinks is too easy, or silly, or boring, he is likely either to say nothing, or give the wrong answer just to keep things interesting for himself. Again, this behavior is found to be completely normal for such a child, but what would a psychologist think, who does not know him and has no training nor experience with the profoundly gifted? How could an accurate assessment be possible, under the circumstances?

The same problems with assessments would exist for the thousands of children who have Asperger's, Tourette's, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder...the list goes on. Without the means to bring in specialists from all these different fields, or to provide adequate training in multiple specialties for those administering the assessments, many of our children will earn a label of "abnormal," when in actuality their behavior is perfectly normal for them.

With test-givers likely ill-prepared to assess the spectrum of differences in our children, and the high likelihood of children being handed misdiagnoses, this entire issue feels like it could easily turn into a witch hunt. Mandatory assessments, without any indication of the need for such, belong in a very different society from ours.

Thank you.

Amy Pott
South Windsor