

Testimony of Gregg Seiderer of Simsbury in Support of HB 6975 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS

Education Committee Public Hearing
Wednesday, March 11, 2015
Room 2C

Chairman Fleischman, Chairman Slossberg, Members of the Education Committee, for the record my name is Gregg Seiderer and I am here to testify in support of HB 6975 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS.

My son Eli suffers from a life-threatening peanut allergy. I want to describe an event that happened to us that brought home for us the need for this task force. We began to meet with our school system six months before Eli began kindergarten. In the course of those six months we learned that the bus company gets trained in First Aid and recognizing the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis. However the bus driver will not administer epinephrine to children who go into anaphylaxis. Worse than that we learned that the bus driver in the event of a medical emergency will not call 911. The bus driver will radio their dispatch who will then contact 911. In a medical emergency where every second counts this was a baffling and unacceptable procedure.

In the course of our discussion with the school system they agreed to provide Eli with a paraprofessional. This paraprofessional would ride the bus and would be responsible for administering his epinephrine if a medical emergency were ever to occur.

Two days before the start of school we received a call from Eli's school that the bus company was making it difficult for the paraprofessional to ride the bus. The paraprofessional was not allowed to park in the bus company parking lot. The bus company refused to allow the paraprofessional to park in a driveway close to our house and get on the bus because that was not an assigned stop. The school asked us if the paraprofessional could park in our driveway and get on the bus with Eli. We refused to do this because we were concerned that this might make Eli a target for bullying. This would draw direct attention to Eli being the reason the paraprofessional was on the bus. Finally it was arranged that the paraprofessional would park in the Simsbury High School parking lot and walk the three-tenths of a mile to the bus company.

We were incredulous at the solution provided. The paraprofessional would have to walk three-tenths of a mile each way in all kinds of weather, all because the bus driver would not administer epinephrine to Eli in a medical emergency. In the course of these events it became clear to us that the bus company was not working with us to provide safe transportation for Eli but rather against us. It did not make financial sense to us to pay someone to ride the bus when if the bus driver was trained the driver could administer the lifesaving medication.

In our experience the bus company was a major obstacle to providing our son with safe transportation to and from school. Although not in the original scope of the bill, it is our hope that this vital transportation issue will become part of HB6975 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS. Thank you for your time.

Gregg Seiderer
Parent
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