



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Education Committee
Public Testimony
March 7, 2016

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 5555
AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT AND PROHIBITING
THE INCLUSION OF PARTICIPATION RATES FOR THE STATE-WIDE MASTERY
EXAMINATION IN THE CALCULATION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S
ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX SCORE

Good Morning Co-Chairs Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann; Vice Chairs Senator Winfield, Representative Sanchez; Ranking Members Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle; and esteemed members of the Committee. My name is Melissa Ziobron and I am proud to represent the 34th District, which encompasses the towns of East Hampton, East Haddam and a part of Colchester. I am writing today in support of HB 5555.

Like many of you, I started my journey in public service by serving on my local Board of Education. During my early tenure I was supportive of "No Child Left Behind" and the well intentioned goals set forth by the federal government. I was also a young mother to two elementary aged children and wanted the best education for them and all children in my small rural community.

Today, I am the mother of a young, smart, talented, and vivacious junior at Seton Hall University and an equally talented junior at Nathan Hale-Ray High School. But, my thoughts about testing have changed. While Common Core and its testing regime have well intentioned goals—like NCLB, it is just as flawed. Worse---the aspect of parental rights regarding the options of testing seems to be waging war on our democracy. Putting ones beliefs about the aspects of Common Core aside, how can we legislate that students MUST take a test if a parent deems that test to be harmful to their child? Who are we to demand such an action and go to the lengths that the Connecticut Board of Education and the Commissioner of the State Department of Education have gone to in demanding compliance?

I have listened to each side of the conversation. Recently I watched a clip of a video that was taken of an education official shutting down a meeting when a parent spoke respectfully about why she and other parents like her, are using their undeniable rights to opt out. Unfortunately, I am no longer shocked when I see footage like this. What's shocking is that the state of Connecticut continues to use forceful means to accomplish compliance and dictating municipal reimbursement is the highest level of force available.

Our democracy hinges on enabling dissent. Respectful, non-violent, and thoughtful dissent. The movement of those who choose to "opt-out" should not be met with threats of forcible testing or loss of financial resources. If we spent the same amount of energy to understand their position and provide meaningful alternatives for those students, our education system will have accomplished much more. Even though I have encouraged my son to take the SAT or previous SBAC tests this does not mean that another student in my district should be forced to take them. Parents have the right to opt-out and this legislation would finally give them the protection they rightfully deserve.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Ziobron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Melissa Ziobron
State Representative
34th District