

February 26, 2019

To the Education Committee and those present,

We are constituents residing in Hamden, CT. Dr. Ahern is an associate professor of psychology at Quinnipiac University, and Mrs. Ahern serves as the Director of Education for Regina Caeli Academy, a national home school support center serving over 1,200 home schooled students in grades Pre-K 4 through 12th grade. We have home schooled our own six children since birth, although we ourselves attended public schools.

We strongly oppose sections 17 and 18 of the proposed SB 874, specifically (a) those lines requiring parents who home educate their children to appear in person to register annually and (b) the distinction drawn between state-approved curricula and other curricula. This is a drastic departure from Connecticut's current laws and its necessity is wholly undemonstrated.

We faithfully pay our taxes to support the Connecticut public schools. By removing our six children from the Hamden school system, we save our neighbors \$18,786 annually **per child** (cf. the CT State Department of Education report, 2018). Connecticut has never granted our children access to any of the programs in our public schools in spite of the fact that we both pay in and by our own efforts save the city funding. This is discrimination, and further requiring home educators to register their children (when wealthier parents who patronize private schools in CT do not) is further discrimination based on our lifestyle choices and economic constraints. We happily endure this discrimination, since the benefit to us is the freedom to educate our children as we determine is best for them.

This new proposal targets the precise population of parents who are most personally invested in bringing up responsible and respectful citizens of the state. At great personal cost, which Mrs. Ahern can attest to through her daily interaction with home educators, these parents pursue with great success the best for their children outside of the traditional education system. According to the National Home Education Research Institute, the success of home education is statistically clear:

- The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests. (The public school average is the 50th percentile; scores range from 1 to 99.) A 2015 study found Black homeschool students to be scoring 23 to 42 percentile points above Black public school students (Ray, 2015).
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
- Whether homeschool parents were ever certified teachers is not related to their children's academic achievement.
- Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.

- Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.
- Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges. (Again, Mrs. ahern can personally attest to this as the Director of Education for one of the largest university-model high schools in the country)

In spite of the funding, the state's own schools have largely failed our children by allowing state and federal government to treat them as disposable subjects in a series of failed educational experiments, No Child Left Behind and Common Core being more recent examples. Of the over 535,000 students in Connecticut's state schools, over 12% will never graduate high school; over 10% are chronically absentee. Privileged students enrolled in public school supplement their learning with costly private tutoring; those who cannot afford this are at a disadvantage. Teachers are underpaid and often put untrained into large classrooms where they are the only responsible adults. Students in inner city schools spend more time studying to pass tests and assessments than they do in healthy childhood activities such as play, music, exercise, or experiencing the outdoors.

A system that cannot get its own house in order financially or educationally has no right to insert itself into our home, which is in order.

Furthermore, concerns about at risk children do not belong to the purview of the superintendents or school districts: they belong to DCF, which investigates all reported homes regardless of where the parents choose to educate their children. Targeting home educators for "registration" as the only non-state school population to come under the oversight of the school districts is, again, blatant discrimination.

We urge you to stop SB 874 immediately and definitively.

Sincerely,
Todd H. Ahern, PhD
Associate Professor of Psychology, Quinnipiac University

Erika J. Ahern, MA
Director of Education, Regina Caeli Academy (national)