

26 February 2019

To the Education Committee of Connecticut,

Growing up in a small town in Connecticut, each day I completed lessons in math, language arts, science, history and geography. I went on field trips to art, science, and history museums. I learned a second language and had the opportunity to travel outside of the country. Growing up, I had horseback riding and music lessons each week and was active in 4-H and my community. I attended the University of Connecticut where I majored in English Literature and minored in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I was three times awarded the University of Connecticut Homer Babbidge Award, given to students who maintain a 4.0 GPA across two consecutive semesters. I am now 24 and have a full-time job.

In many ways, my childhood and education were typical of what we strive for in this country: I had many opportunities to increase my learning and social skills, and I was taught the value of respect, hard work, and cooperation. For some, it may come as a surprise to learn that I was also homeschooled for pre-K through high school.

As a homeschooler, and someone who continues to support homeschoolers in my wider community, I write out of concern in regards to the proposed SB-874. This bill, sections 17 and 18, is in direct opposition to family's privacy and rights to make decisions about their children's upbringing and education. In Section 17, the bill states that parents would be required to register annually as homeschoolers, to "show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in public schools" (p.20-21, proposed SB-874). The bill does not specify how this "equivalence" is to be proven, and what will be deemed as acceptable.

Proving "equivalence" is, to borrow a colloquialism, like comparing apples to oranges. Families choose to homeschool for a variety of different reasons, and they use different kinds of curriculums. Curriculums are painstakingly chosen and designed by parents in order to meet their individual children's needs. This is true of every single homeschooler I know. The homeschoolers I grew up with are now well-rounded, contributing members of their communities. They are working in family businesses and attending undergrad and graduate degree programs. They have jobs in education, retail, healthcare, veterinary care, and finance, among other fields. The decision to homeschool is made in the same careful way that other parents decide to move to certain school districts or send their children to a particular private school.

Section 18 of the proposed bill states that, "Not later than July 1, 2012, the Department of Education shall 648 approve and make available model curricula and frameworks in reading and mathematics for grades prekindergarten to grade four, inclusive" (p.21). It states that one group that this curriculum will be made available to is curriculum will be made available to is "parents registered to provide home school instruction" (p. 21). Inherent in the wording of this bill is the idea that homeschool families are incapable of measuring up to people who are

publicly educated unless we use the “approved” curriculum. We, the homeschoolers of Connecticut, who are backed by The Connecticut Homeschool Network, are concerned that section 18 is a slippery slope to our being mandated to use the Department of Education’s approved curriculum. This would be counter to our rights as private citizens and our ability to teach the children in our care, in the way we believe will help them thrive.

Respectfully,
Kathryn Ann Allie