

In opposition to bill SB-874

Senators, State Board of Education and to whom all else this may concern: I am Sara Estevez and I emphatically oppose bill SB-874, specifically section(s) 17 and 18. The Department of Education via the public school system fails at providing model curricula for their students, public schools also fail at providing the optimal results for academic performance; public schools fail at being able to use evidenced-based techniques in: promoting a social-emotional learning environment for students to learn, free of trauma and sexual harassment from teachers and peers, threats of terrorism, bullying and peer pressure leading to suicide.

The question I ask is, why should we [homeschoolers] be subject to a system that can't even provide optimal results for their own students?

On “model curricula”, which we assume the state means the Common Core, it is too soon to see results and too soon to realize the promises it has made to make students college and career ready. The statistics on success are not in yet. Yet, statistics on homeschooling success have been in for many decades. Homeschoolers use a variety of curricula and continue to outperform their private school and public-school peers, proving that the state is unable to provide “model” curricula.

Current statistics reveal that homeschoolers are performing 30% higher in all standardized tests including the SAT and the ACT; public school students lag behind at 50% while homeschoolers sit at a constant 84% rate of success for more than 2 decades (NCES). These stats are nothing new. In section 18 line 659, the bill proposes that the state provide its curricula online to close “achievement gaps” for “racial groups” yet, according to the most current research by the NCES African-American students who are homeschooled perform 23%-42% higher in standardized testing than do their African-American peers in public school.

As stated in section 16 the bill proposes evidence-based practices to promote “social-emotional learning, trauma-informed instruction, behavior management and de-escalation techniques” for a healthier environment for instruction. However, to date it has failed to provide that type of system. The home environment is still proven the safest place to learn and the least traumatic. Homeschoolers are free from the fear of sexual harassment, gun violence, peer suicides, drug exposure, bullying, and all the pertinent social pressures negatively affecting children in the public-school system today.

In conclusion, the principles of our democracy do not hold the people accountable by the school system; it is the school system that is accountable to the people, as it should be. I'd ask that this body consider the inherent structure of democracy and the evidence, the research provided by the National Center for Education Statistics on the success of homeschooling. And if expertise was weighed by science than homeschoolers should be the ones providing the pedagogical insight.

Again, I ask why should we have to register with a system that lags behind us in academic performance, in promoting a safe social and emotional learning environment, and one that cannot prove their curricula is superior than those used by homeschoolers?

