

February 27, 2019

Re: SB #874 - AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.

Dear Education Committee Members,

I am a homeschooling parent, and I am writing to express my opposition to SB #874, which aims to mandate annual in-person registration of homeschooling families and impose additional unnecessary regulations on homeschoolers in CT.

There seems to be no justification for any of these initiatives, as it is unclear what benefit could be derived from and whose interests would be served by this mandatory annual in-person registration of homeschoolers. Of what use would this information be to the already overburdened school systems who are struggling to meet the needs of their student population? How could this be helpful to homeschoolers who are doing just fine under existing CT statutes and regulations?

Statistically, homeschoolers in CT are performing better academically than their public school counterparts. My oldest son who was homeschooled until 9th grade had no trouble with entering high school and was placed in all honors and advanced courses. He was the only freshman in his high school who was taking two math courses, 10th and 11th grade level math, simultaneously. There are countless other examples of successful homeschoolers in our state and nationwide. As a whole, homeschoolers are doing very well.

Conversely, the public school systems are the ones that are in trouble. This is one of the major reasons why families choose to withdraw their children from school and start homeschooling. Many parents, after unsuccessful attempts to establish a productive relationship with their local schools (teachers, principals, special education directors, etc.), lose faith in their district's ability to provide quality education for their children. There are issues of politics, budgetary limitations, (particularly in inner-city schools), inconsistency, lack of proper management, responsibility shifting and poor communication within each individual school, among the different schools in the same district, and certainly, across CT boards of education.

These systematic failures are exactly what lead to the death of Matthew Tirado whose case was mismanaged by the school system and the DCF. Homeschoolers had nothing to do with it.

Therefore, it would make sense for the Education Committee to focus on the improvement of the existing educational and safety systems for those children who are under their direct supervision – public school children. These systems need to be re-organized to provide clear communication between public health bodies, multiple points of checks and consistent monitoring, in order to ensure that other public-schooled children do not suffer Matthew Tirado's fate. All efforts should be focused on making CT school systems more safe and effective.

In light of these facts, it is shocking and absolutely illogical that the child advocate in charge of the investigation of Matthew's case would conceive of the absurd idea that, in order to solve Connecticut's educational crisis, the state needs to impose additional regulations on the thriving homeschooling minority, thereby diverting attention from the struggling public education systems that serve the overwhelming majority of the state's students and ARE in desperate need of restructuring.

All that this initiative would accomplish is create more useless paperwork and, ultimately, increase the burden of the boards of education by mandating that they now regulate and monitor homeschooled students and families, in addition to the ones that they are already unable to manage properly.

The effect of SB #874 would be ultimately counter-productive. It would cause more cracks in the overburdened educational system and obstruct the efforts of homeschooling parents to provide the best education they can for their children.

Therefore, I urge you to vote NO on SB #874 and, instead, to direct all your efforts toward devising and implementing effective strategies for improving our state's public education system, so that all CT children who are NOT homeschooled (an overwhelming majority!) could receive quality education.

Sincerely,

Yuliya Gilshteyn

New Fairfield, CT