

Feb. 27, 2019

To Honorable Members of the Connecticut Education Committee:

I am writing to respectfully request that the Committee remove language from Sec. 17 of SB 874 that would require homeschoolers to register their children with the State of Connecticut via their local public school district; and from Sec. 18 of SB 874 that would make state-approved curriculum available to homeschoolers.

There is no good reason to require in-person public registration for any privately educated child. Connecticut is known by homeschoolers as one of the few states that continues to value educational freedom, a liberty that supports the enduring values of family and self-determination. Yet once a state begins to put conditions and controls on a privately educated child, neither the family nor the child is free. They become accountable to a public service they have not opted to receive.

Connecticut law now treats home education as the default setting, as it should. It is primarily parents and guardians, not state officials, who are responsible for facilitating their children's learning. State representatives and the public make services available to aid families in that endeavor, but at no time should registering for or using a public service be required. Some families will avail themselves of the full gamut of public education services, in accordance with their goals and their needs; others will seek out the basic level of service; and still others will require little or no public educational services — meaning the students are

privately educated.

Why then, should a family be held accountable to the same public service they have decided not to use?

I can think of many public services — libraries, for instance — that offer major benefits to children. Connecticut's public library system offers just as many learning opportunities as public schools do — if not more — yet no one forces or coerces a family to register with a particular library or the state library system.

Also, although Sec. 18 does not require homeschoolers to adopt state-approved curriculum, the reference to homeschools in a statute referring to state-approved curriculum standards could muddy the important distinction between state-approved schools and parent-directed homeschools.

Homeschoolers read books, conduct research, listen to audiobooks, watch documentaries, take classes, meet friends, belong to clubs, play games, participate in challenges and contests, and join in community-wide events through our libraries in addition to countless other community and Internet-based resources. What's more, they partake of all this at their own pace, according to their individual interests and learning styles, with parents/guardians guiding them on their path.

By not being beholden to the public school system, homeschoolers are able to embrace a process of self-

directed, parent and community-facilitated life-long learning. Requiring that children register with a public school system is the beginning of the end of educational freedom in Connecticut.

Sincerely,
Patricia Kalish
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