

February 28, 2019

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am strongly opposed to Sections 17 and 18 of Senate Bill 874. I encourage you to vote against including these sections in any bill you pass to the full Legislature for consideration.

These two provisions are both aimed at homeschooling families in Connecticut. Though it is true that several recent cases involving homeschooling in the state and local media have raised concerns among many people, it is manifestly evident that the failures in those cases was not with the state or local authorities knowing about the issues, but was with the failure of the authorities to act to protect the children that they were already fully cognizant of.

In the Adam Lanza and Matthew Tirado cases, DCF was intimately familiar with, and heavily involved in, the life and struggles of the teen boy at issue. Further, in both cases, the boy was not homeschooled. And yet, many have attempted to use these cases to demonstrate why homeschooled children require greater monitoring by the state.

That being said, there are three main grounds upon which I would urge you to strip these sections from Senate Bill 874:

First, studies have shown that greater regulation of homeschoolers does not result in improved safety outcomes. <https://www.nheri.org/degree-of-homeschool-regulation-no-relationship-to-homeschool-child-abuse/> In fact, homeschoolers are generally safer than public school students. <https://homeschoolingbackgrounder.com/child-abuse-neglect-fatalities-2016/> Therefore, increasing regulation is not an effective solution to any safety concerns.

Second, the Department of Children and Families has at its disposal all the legal and administrative tools it needs to investigate legitimate concerns of abuse or neglect, whether a student is schooled at home or elsewhere. It is a complete fallacy to suggest that DCF's investigative powers end when a student is not in a public school.

Third, and finally, our state is in deep trouble financially. Further, the Department of Children and Families is overworked and understaffed and is still under the watchful eye of the federal government for its failures. Local school boards are continually complaining about lack of funds for important things like staffing classrooms with teachers and aides. To add to the workload of either of these layers of government will require additional staffing and increase the budget deficits. And for what? To keep a list of homeschoolers and provide them with curriculum options that they don't want and can get without government aid if they do?

Though there are other reasons why this esteemed body should not advance Sections 17 and 18 of SB 874, I believe that these arguments are reasons enough. Please do the right thing and allow homeschoolers to continue to freely pursue their God- and legally-granted rights to educate their children in the best way they can- in the family setting.

Yours,

Timothy Knotts

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