

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, I live in Manchester, CT and I oppose the following language in SB874: "The parent or person having control of a child who provides home instruction to such child shall personally appear annually at the school district office and sign a registration form indicating that such child will be receiving home instruction."

Our family has been homeschooling in CT for many years now. Our daughters are 18 and 13 and we have homeschooled from the beginning of their educational journey. I oppose the above language because: 1) I see no demonstrated need for its inclusion, 2) it puts an unnecessary and intrusive requirement on our family.

First, I see no demonstrated need for why I should be required to go into the office of a school system that my children do not attend to register them to receive home instruction, which I am providing. What is the goal of this registration?

I can see one potential goal being a well-intentioned but mis-guided concern over the safety of children being homeschooled. However, we already know that most children that are abused and/or neglected are already attending brick-and-mortar schools and many are already on the radar of DCF. I fail to see how being on a list with the school system is going to contribute to keeping homeschooled children safe, especially since the school systems have a hard enough time keeping children that are actually attending their schools safe. It seems to me that focusing on having DCF maintain contact and follow-up with children and families at risk, and increasing overall safety in the schools, would be more effective methods of increasing child safety than having a completely unrelated group of families required to register their children in a school system they do not participate in.

Or perhaps the goal is to determine how many children in a district are attending school? In that case, CT law already provides a mechanism for the Board of Education in each district to determine how many children of compulsory school age are in their district and where they are being educated. This law covers all children, public, private and homeschooled, and puts the onus on the Board of Education to determine how children not in the public system are receiving instruction. It does not put the burden on families to physically walk into a public school building and "register" their children. Again, as families not participating in the public school system, I fail to see why we should be required to register our children with that system in order to instruct them at home. This puts an unnecessary requirement on our family and just makes no sense.

And finally, I have concerns about how this information is going to be used, especially without knowing the goal of its collection. For example, if the goal is to try to "keep homeschooled children safe", how exactly would this work? Is the list of all homeschooled children in a district going to be turned over to DCF? And if so, for what purpose? If DCF is already involved, then they should already be following up with the family without the need for a list of all homeschoolers. If DCF is not involved, then why on earth would they need our names? Will the name of all public and private students also be turned over to DCF in the same way? Again, there seems to be no reasonable purpose for this kind of intrusion into our family, or anyone's family.

As a homeschooling family, we pay taxes to ensure that our state enjoys stellar public services. We expect the public education system in our state to be excellent and support efforts to make it so. We expect our Senators and Representatives to spend their time and our tax dollars enhancing the educational opportunities of children in the public school system. We expect our money to be spent in an effort to reduce the opportunity

gap for black and brown children, to train teachers in how to recognize and dismantle their own inherent biases, to ensure that children of color have teachers that look like them and share their perspective, to ensure that our transgender youth feel safe and welcomed in every way, and to have better systems in place to safeguard children's emotional and physical health and safety. These are the things we expect our legislators to spend their resources on. We do not expect to see these resources squandered in developing and proposing unnecessary language related to homeschooling families.

We made our choice to homeschool not because we don't believe in public education, but rather, because we have specific educational goals for our children and family that are better met at home. Since we have not opted into the public education system, we do not expect to be required to participate in its bureaucracy, especially when there is no demonstrated need that we do so.

Sincerely,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD
Manchester, CT