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**Testimony Opposing Raised Governor's Bill 847**  
**"AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN**  
**CONNECTICUT."**

Thank you Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, as well as my personal Senator Flexer and Representative Johnson, and honored members of the Education Committee. My name is Stephen Lyon, from Willimantic, CT, and I am providing testimony in opposition to Governor's Bill 847, An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut (specifically Sections 17 & 18, lines 609-661), because it is unnecessary intrusion into the decision making process of parents regarding their children's education, and the state's time and resources would better be spent elsewhere.

I have personally benefited from home education. I was schooled at home from kindergarten until I was 16 years old. The flexibility that home education provided me allowed me to adapt my learning to deals with my strengths and weaknesses, and to allow me to pursue other extracurricular and academic activities. Due to this I was able to accelerate rapidly; I started college at Quinebaug Valley Community College on my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and graduated with my Associate's Degree at 18 years of age. I progressed successfully through higher education, obtaining my Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Eastern Connecticut State University (where I graduated *Magna Cum Laude* in 2010), and then my Juris Doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Law, in 2014. I was active both socially and academically; I was nominated for Community Service Awards at QVCC, a club I started won "Best New Club" and "Best Event" at ECSU, and I was an Executive Board member of 3 Campus Organizations in Law School, where I received the UConn Law School Foundation Award for Outstanding Service to the Campus. No one can rationally state that I was unable to function socially or academically.

I am not a homeschooling advocate, but I am an advocate for parents being involved in their children's education. What this bill does is just add an extra step of complication to parents who want to take a lead role in making sure their children get a good education; similar to bills which chill speech, having to come in front of school officials for their permission is intimidating to parents and will have negative effects. Further, as we all know, our education system in Connecticut is strained as it is, both in staff and in financing; we should not add to the workload and cost of our already stressed and stretched school boards.

The government should focus on the areas of child education that are currently struggling to perform; home education is not one of these areas. In the United States, homeschoolers typically score 15-30 percentile points higher than public schooled students standardized tests (in black students it has been shown to be 23-42 percentile points), regardless of family's income or level of formal education. "Taxpayers spend an average of \$11,732 per pupil annually in public schools, plus capital expenditures. Taxpayers spend nothing on most homeschool students and homeschool families spend an average of \$600 per student annually for their education." (These,

and other informative statistics can be found here: <https://www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling/>). The state should not be spending its time on trying to fix an area that doesn't need fixing; it should focus on fixing its own public schools before trying to intrude on other schools that do not need the help.

Finally, while this regulation may seem to be small and harmless, it sets a dangerous precedent. By requiring registration in order to home educate one's children, we establish that the primary authority over education and child rearing, and that state the purely gives permission to parents (a permission that can be taken away easily). The primary party responsible for a child's rearing should be the parent, not the state; the state should only step in when the parent has been shown to have failed at a level worse than the government has, and all the statistics show that homeschooling fails substantially less than state run schooling.

I would like to end with a personal anecdote. When I was 12 years old, legislation was introduced here in Hartford to prohibit homeschooling. My father brought me to this building to watch the hearings, as a civics lesson. From that moment I was hooked on politics and government. I was inspired from the thousands of families that came to advocate for their education rights. I was intrigued by the manner in which testimony was presented. I decided then that I wanted to be a lawyer. I followed that dream and achieved it, being admitted to practice law in 2014. Without homeschooling and that experience, there's a significant chance that my life would have gone very differently. I'm thankful that it went the way it did, and I want others to be able to have similar opportunities. (By the way, I was taught primarily by high-school educated mother, while my father worked 2 jobs to keep a family of 5 going with annual wages of less than \$40,000/year – it's not finances or education of parents that determines success, but effort!)

Home education is one of the very few areas in which Connecticut leads the nation with regards to individual freedom and choice; it worked for me, it has worked for thousands of others, and it will continue to work if we allow it to continue in the same manner and refuse to inject government regulation into it.

For the forgoing reasons I respectfully request that the members of this committee vote against Sections 17 &18 of Governors Bill 847.

Sincerely,

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