

Dear Honorable Members of the Connecticut Education Committee,

I am writing you with regard to the proposed language addition to Section 17 and Section 18 of SB 874.

I oppose the addition of this language for the following reasons:

The language in this law assumes that districts function with the student's best interest at heart. As an Education Advocate, I can tell you frequently this is NOT the case. For every wonderful district, there are many others where IDEA 2004 is completely disregarded and ignored with the underlying strategy that it will cost less to pay the school's attorney if a family takes their case to hearing, than it will to provide the student with the individualized services afforded them under federal law. This strategy often works because conservative estimates for a family to pursue a hearing range from \$10,000 - \$20,000. Administrators frequently deny services, outright lie, disregard IDEA 2004 and bully parents until they stop fighting or stand up and hire support.

These are the people you would have overseeing the education I provide to my daughter.

My choice to homeschool my daughter started with the bus ride to school. There are a group of five boys - known to the district as long term disciplinary problems - who have called her retarded to her face (and behind her back), and speak constantly of group sex and gang rape scenarios loudly while exposing anyone around them to this unbelievably inappropriate commentary. This is unacceptable for regular education students to be exposed to, and even more so for the special education population. They are easily manipulated and taken advantage of. When we voiced our concerns to the district we were told that if they continued to "write up" the students for their behavior on the bus that it would count as suspensions and they would be expelled (these specific children have been causing these issues since elementary school). Therefore, they did and continue to do nothing to address the issue. There have been three new bus drivers in the last three years, currently they have a revolving list of substitutes because no one will take on the route. So we chose to drive our daughter back and forth to school.

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Once at school, she was taunted and picked on routinely at her locker each morning, at lunch each day, made fun of for stuttering, and the final straw - openly being picked on for being a person with a disability. She was NOT the only special education student in her grade to have this experience. The school principal did nothing but question if these events ever really happened (blaming the victim) so as to avoid further action. While we understand the district has difficulty in truly holding the appropriate parties responsible, their failure to do so causes harm to many, and in this case to the most vulnerable of

the student population. My choice to homeschool my daughter is due to the failure of the district to provide a safe learning environment for her.

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These are not people who have my daughter's best interest at heart. Quite often decisions in school districts (ESPECIALLY at the administrative level) are motivated by financial and political concerns, and quite often bias against outspoken parents advocating for their children.

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My choice to homeschool was not motivated by my desire to teach my daughter, rather as the only option left to protect her emotional and physical health and well being when my district did not. The level of stress she endured daily was responsible for her declining health. The second half of her 6th grade year she was out on medical necessity due to a condition called abdominal migraines, and also episodes of syncope. To be clear, she would wake up in the middle of the night with unexplained vomiting, have severe and constant stomach pains, and would pass out without warning - fully and completely to the point where we had to have her cleared by a cardiologist.

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The proposed language in SB 874 Sections 17 and 18, in my opinion, are no more than a poorly veiled attempt to scapegoat homeschoolers for DCF's failures, most recently with regard to the blatant failure to protect Matthew Tirado after multiple reports of neglect an abuse were filled with DCF.

I vehemently oppose SB 874 Sections 17 and 18.

Sincerely,

Dina Madore