

My name is Amanda Mangler. I am a homeschooling parent. I oppose Sections 17 and 18 of SB 874.

I enjoy reading articles on education: child development, successful programs, research that reveals best practices. I am, after all, a full-time educator. Remarkably, these articles endorse homeschooling! Perhaps not directly. But they describe what homeschooling looks like. Individualized education. Self-paced study. Hands-on learning. Interdisciplinary approaches. Real-life problem-solving. Interest-led lessons. Play! Creativity! Curiosity! Joy! Education that capitalizes on children's boundless enthusiasm. Education in the context of a loving relationship with the teacher.

**The cutting edge of education research and its best practices describe what I do with my kids every day.** I craft lessons for my children that connect with their unique personalities, their drive, their interests, what lights them up. We read great books and discuss them. We tinker and experiment. We engage the world, training our kids to be compassionate, curious, and charitable. We love learning, and we are building lifelong learners. If you met my kids, I think you would find them interesting and interested.

**I am therefore surprised to find myself treated as suspect.** The language in SB 874 assumes I'm lost without the intervention of my local public school. I am already required by law to give my kids "equivalent instruction." (I'm actually aiming much higher than that.) Section 17 of the proposed bill requires me to register in person. As if I were hiding something. As if a school official could judge with a glance whether I'm educating my children well or not. Section 18 links home schools to failing public schools by offering "model curricula" to "schools identified by the department as having academic achievement gaps or parents who are registered to provide home school instruction." This is not merely making a resource available. It is in fact suggesting home schools need the same remedial attention as failing public schools.

Both of these measures are misguided.

**First of all, parents, not the state, have the right to determine our children's education.** We choose whether to educate them at home, at a private school at our own cost, or send them for a free education. The state does not make this decision. This is an important distinction, and it is threatened by SB 874. I educate my children or delegate the task to the state. Not the other way around. The school does not "approve" me. The state requires an educated populace, provides a free option, and enforces the law only when a parent fails to educate a child.

**Secondly, home schools provide an excellent education.** Homeschooled children are well-educated, by any measure. Homeschoolers score on average 15-30 percentage points above public-schooled peers on standardized tests. This success does not differ with race or socio-economic status. Children with even severe learning disabilities fare as well or better in home schools than in the public schools. Homeschooled kids get into and graduate from colleges at higher rates than the average student. And they become civically engaged adults who volunteer in their communities at nearly twice the rate of the general population (Dumas, Gates, & Schwarzer, "Evidence for Homeschooling: Constitutional Analysis in Light of Social Science Research", *Widener Law Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2010, pp. 63-87).

If home schools provide an excellent education, arguably better than the public school, why is Connecticut giving us pointers and insisting we register in person?

**Government regulation of homeschoolers is not necessary.** Homeschooling parents already possess the most powerful intrinsic motivation for ensuring our children's success: we love our kids! We have made profound sacrifices by living on a single income and purchasing our own curriculum. We have chosen a lower standard of living for a higher standard of education. More than any other teacher, more than any administrator, more than any legislator, I know my kid and I want her to succeed. Paperwork is not going to influence that one way or the other.

**Government regulation of homeschoolers does not improve academic achievement.** Studies show that homeschoolers in high-regulation states have the same standardized test scores as those in low-regulation states. States that require parents show up in person, go through a portfolio, submit quarterly lesson plans, tally their hours, have their child regularly tested--those states have the same academic outcomes among homeschoolers as states like Connecticut and New Jersey, which is where we lived prior to a recent move. The freedom to homeschool was one of the major factors we weighed in this relocation. I have no interest in pointless busywork.

But what about abuse? Is that the subtext of this in-person registration? Is it a bruise check? Obviously, child abuse is unacceptable; child abusers ought not to be protected; and we must rescue children who are harmed by their parents. However, we cannot assume families are abusive unless they show up in person and prove their innocence. Such a line of thinking leads quickly to invasions of privacy.

**Child abuse is rare among homeschoolers.** Statistically, a child is much safer in a home school than in another school. A 2017 study found that "Legally homeschooled students are 40% less likely to die by child abuse or neglect than the average student nationally" ("Child Abuse of Public School, Private School, and Homeschool Students: Evidence, Philosophy, and Reason," National Home Education Research Institute, 2018).

**Increased regulation does not reduce abuse.** A study of incidences of child abuse among homeschoolers from 2000-2017 revealed "no statistically significant relationship between the degree of state control (regulation) of homeschooling and the number of abused homeschool students" ("The Relationship Between the Degree of State Regulation of Homeschooling and the Abuse of Homeschool Children," National Home Education Research Institute, 2018).

Increased oversight of the homeschool community does not in fact prevent the abuse which is often used to justify burdening law-abiding parents with increased paperwork, official visits, and oversight. Presumably this is because abusers do not comply with regulations, or Child Protective Services does not have the capacity to follow up on reports.

**I urge you not to impose burdensome and useless regulations on homeschoolers.** Instead, focus your attention on schools with those "demonstrable achievement gaps." Give Child Protective Services the resources and accountability it needs to rescue children from abuse. Don't assume that those of us who keep our kids out of the school are doing so because we are hiding something, or that we are backward, or we are in need of remedial attention. Homeschoolers are model citizens.

Please do not let Sections 17 and 18 of SB 874 become law.

Thanks for considering my views.