

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Education Committee  
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Governor's Bill No.874 - An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut

Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Laura Palumbo and I am a home educator. I am testifying in opposition to Section 17 and Section 18 of SB-874. The proposed language should be removed and the existing language for CT General Statute Section 10-184 and Section 10-1600 should be left unchanged.

Section 17 would amend General Statute Section 10-184, the Duties of Parents, to require all parents providing home instruction to appear in person to “register” with the local school district each year in order to provide education at home. At best, this amendment is an unnecessary solution to a problem that doesn't exist. At worst, it fuels a power differential between state and local educational establishments and home educators that already routinely produces harassment, intimidation, and unjustified and harmful referrals for DCF investigation. This places an unnecessary burden on innocent families and places additional power with agencies that have known problems to solve and with significant history of providing ineffective protection in known cases of abuse and neglect.

I am deeply concerned about the motivation for these changes. A member of the home education community has been informed by a legislator that this “registration” is ultimately designed to enable DCF to hold the names of every student whose schooling is directed by their parents on the grounds that these families pose an increased risk. This appears to be the direct result of a propaganda campaign launched last spring by the Office of the Child Advocate in response to the tragic case of Matthew Tirado. The OCA skewed numbers and selectively picked data to construct a narrative, pushed also by the media, which blamed unregulated homeschooling for this death. In fact, Matthew Tirado was neither homeschooled nor a member of the homeschool community. There is simply no connection. The OCA pushed this narrative instead of addressing DCF's failure to properly investigate a student under their care and the failure of the OCA to intervene even though this was well within their existing powers. The OCA continues to push an unfounded agenda to deflect responsibility.

Section 17 of SB 874 is a shielded attempt at making homeschoolers pay for a crime they did not commit. I urge the committee not to be tricked by the sensationalized rhetoric from the OCA and DCF about the risks involved with home education. There is simply no factual basis that students

educating at home under the provisions of Statute 10-184 are at increased risk. I am angered that homeschoolers are being scapegoated and targeted.

Finally, the amendment detailed in Section 18 is likewise unnecessary. There are vast resources available to parent educators. Parents are deeply committed to finding effective and engaging curricula, finely tailored to individual need.

In short, home educating parents should be able to give our children a high-quality, personalized education, following all existing laws that outline the content of that education and following numerous other laws that are already in place that offer child protection WITHOUT additional registration and tracking based on a unfounded, presumed guilt.