

Testimony for public hearing
Education committee
March 1, 2019

Marcus Palumbo
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Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Marcus Palumbo. I am a High School Sophomore and I am a homeschooler. I am writing to oppose Section 17 and Section 18 of SB-874. The proposed language should be removed and the existing language for CT General Statutes Section 10-184 and Section 10-1600 left unchanged. I would like to speak about my own personal experience with homeschooling, and the wider homeschooling community, and about how Sections 17 and 18 would negatively affect my learning experience. Starting homeschooling was a decision we made as a whole family and one which I was very involved in. Homeschooling has given me the opportunity to more deeply explore the things I am passionate about alongside my other studies. All of the people in my friend group who are homeschooled value their education and seek additional opportunities to learn outside of class time. One common thing among many of us in the homeschooling community is that the traditional school system did not suit our learning needs. I have had enormous success outside of the traditional schooling environment with the world as my classroom. With the support and guidance offered by my parents, and the resources available, I can literally learn anything!

I am opposed to Section 17 because it devalues and marginalizes my educational setting and takes a “guilty until proven innocent” perspective on homeschooling parents. Homeschooling parents put an incredible amount of time and effort into designing courses for their students, and are responsible for creating learning and social opportunities for the community. Sections 17 overlooks all of this and treats parents/teachers as if they have done something wrong by providing a different but equally valid learning experience for their children.

I am opposed to Section 18 for state-selected educational resources because it is simply unnecessary and limiting, and paves the way for state-mandated curriculum. This ignores the many excellent curricula widely available, especially those designed for individualized rather than group instruction.

Last spring I attended a press conference in response to the OCA allegations that homeschoolers are at significant risk, and saw first hand how events can be distorted and taken

out of context to construct a misleading narrative. I attended and filmed parts of the event, and when I watched the news coverage, they did not use any of the spoken statements by homeschool community leaders and the senators who spoke at the event. Instead, the news used it to lead into an interview with the OCA, where she tried to use homeschoolers as a scapegoat for their failure and the failure of DCF to take the steps to prevent the death of Matthew Tirado, who, in fact, was not homeschooled. I was angered by how my amazing homeschool community was portrayed. This showed me how media coverage can selectively push an agenda, and how important it is for individual citizens to be actively engaged and present in civic processes. Even officials within the government, such as in the case of the OCA, will use propaganda rather than facts to push their agenda. I can't wait for the opportunity to vote.

Please remove the proposed language from Section 17 and Section 18 and leave the existing language for Section 10-184 and Section 10-1600 of the CT General Statutes unchanged.