

Dear Honored Members of the Education Committee - Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in adamant OPPOSITION to Section 17 and 18 of the Governors Bill SB 874 as it pertains to Homeschooling families in the State of Connecticut.

I am a proud parent of three children - two of whom are currently in public school and one who graduated from homeschooling in 2018 and is studying pre-nursing at Northwestern CT Community College. Our choice to homeschool was not taken lightly. We did our research, we made the necessary scheduling accommodations, and sacrificed more than I can even briefly tell you with regards to lifestyle and career. It was our choice to do it for the good of our children and I have absolutely no regrets about the 6 years I spent homeschooling all of them.

One of the largest reasons we made the choice to homeschool was to stop the horrific bullying of my, at the time, 12 year old daughter. I'll never forget the last couple of weeks where I would pick up my oldest from sixth grade bathed in tears. She was unable to take the bus to school because of the constant taunting and threats - so I would drive her to and from school but that really didn't help things. We had multiple meetings with school administrators, phone calls to parents, but to no avail. A Zero tolerance policy didn't help, teachers who care didn't help, the idea that "children will be children" didn't help - My daughter was becoming increasingly depressed and it was time for, what I thought was a drastic decision - Homeschooling. Today I have no question in my mind, that the decision we made then saved my daughter's life.

During our time homeschooling my entire family enjoyed the company of our fellow homeschoolers from all over the state. We found our clan - a group of people who cared so much about their children that they invested everything they had, made adjustments to their life you can't even imagine, and supported one another. I can admit now that I miss this deeply, among other things, about our current public school experience.

My children didn't fall behind because of their homeschool days - they have made friends just like they did at home - their grades are obviously up to par and they are a leader among their peers. All is not fantastic in the public schools however - Without disclosing too much I need to say - that we have been in contact with school administration on behalf of one of my children because the child was being sexually harassed. This is a new problem I could have never imagined when my oldest was having such a hard time and we are working through now if we want to continue public schooling during the next year.

Please during your hearing - answer the question - Why is the state suddenly so interested in getting a count via registration? REGISTRATION - a term that leaves a really bad taste in my mouth and should in yours. INVOLUNTARY REGISTRATION - Just say that out loud and tell me what you think of. If a parent chooses to utilize the public school system so be it - I knew going in that I was signing away my right to choose a curriculum and what kind of schedule to keep during the day - but it should be everyone's right to make that choice. You must set the bar very high to take away those rights or what's next? The right to

choose your children's bedtime? The right to read certain books or visit a museum during school hours?

Why is the State so interested in stomping on the right of a parent to school their own child without any data to support the idea that homeschoolers aren't actually homeschooling their children? Is it due to the failure of DCF in the Matthew Tirado case? If so this is an outrageous - opportunistic - power grab. There is absolutely no data to support the idea that homeschoolers as a whole are doing anything but follow the law with regards to treatment of their own children. There is no statistics that indicate abuse is more or less likely to happen in homeschooling families, that homeschooling children fall behind their peers. Is it, as many have reported, so DCF can have a "list" to cross check? If that's the case then why only homeschoolers - why not private or parochial schools?

Why do we as parents of our homeschooled children now need to be registered like we are doing something wrong? Why do we suddenly need to lose our presumption of innocence? Why do we need to be told what curriculum to use when what we are doing works just fine. I don't need them to recommend any curriculum that is already available to me should I choose to use it. It is that choice is what I wish to preserve.

In summary you may ask - what's the big deal? Just show up once a year - make available a curriculum that is already available. All of you in the hearing room and around the state know better. No way it will stop there. Legislative creep is real and I will not let it infiltrate homeschooling freedom in the state of Connecticut. Please get your own house in order before going after the rights of homeschoolers.

Sincerely,

Elaine Pelizzari, Winsted CT