

Testimony for Public Hearing
Education Committee
March 1st, 2019

Governor's Bill No.874 - An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut

Good Afternoon Educator Committee,

My name is Tammy Podos. My husband and I made the decision to remove our children from the public school system when they completed grades 6 and 8. Although we pulled them out for several reasons, our primary concern at the time was their education.

My children always received good grades, so I as a parent did not have any concerns about their academics throughout their elementary school years. However, I was attending college myself, and I noticed the incoming students lacked basic math, reading, and grammar skills. Many struggled with the basic task of writing an academic paper. My husband and I started taking a closer look at what our children were learning in school.

I researched various curriculums. I compared our public school, wealthy public schools, private preparatory schools, private schools, and religious schools. I compared school scores where the data was available, and I was appalled to learn that despite the great grades our public school students received, they only had a fifteen percent college readiness rate. The bottom line is we as parents are responsible for our daughters' education and I knew we had to do something.

My husband and I could not afford private tuition. We hesitantly considered homeschooling our children. I continued to gather curriculum information and piece together what would work for my children and prepare them for college. We decided to protect our families value system, our religious freedom, and to ensure that our children were prepared for college, homeschooling was our only option.

Soon after we started homeschooling I was in a car accident and sustained multiple injuries, including traumatic brain injury. I still feel we as parents did a better job educating our children than the public school system. Each scope and sequence was prepared in ways to fit their individual needs. My oldest was able to complete three years within a year and a half, essentially "catching up" the two years that she lost while attending public school. She also took courses that sparked her interest, such as Japanese and Geology, which were not offered in our public high school. My younger child was able to learn at her own pace, which greatly reduced her anxiety and severe health issues. She was no longer just "passed through", and she was able to learn concepts which helped her improve her reading and writing. My youngest was also able to complete three years of curriculum over a two year period. Due to her health improvements she is now able to participate in sports, and her reading has improved dramatically

(the public school was having everything read to her). She is also able to work on skills that will apply to her trade.

There is something fundamentally wrong with our public school system. We as parents have the right to educate our children the way we see fit (without rape scenes in a movie shown to my seventh grader or teaching her how to put a condom on a banana in eight grade). I do not accept teachers attempting to teach my children “good morals or values”, all while contradicting what we teach at home (abstinence).

I also value animosity, of which we did not receive because our children were previously enrolled in public school. We were judged by teachers, and even an assistant principal who told me and my daughter she would not graduate or get a job without their public school diploma. This same man stated her home school grades didn't count because he didn't trust my grading (to which my daughter responded that I was the most difficult grader she had). We were also harassed by our Board of Education, whom took nine months to review and accept our portfolio, putting undue stress on my daughter who was trying to get the credits approved. They were also telling her she would have to retake everything if she were to enroll to participate in UConn's ECE program. I eventually submitted all of our scope and sequences, as well as all of her work. They demanded written notes from all of her gym teachers – two years after she completed the classes! It was a horrific process that I never want to see happen to anyone. Also, we were continually judged by teachers, one whom had the nerve to call me and rant for 45 minutes to me on how we keep our children in a bubble. This is why I am adamantly against Governor's Bill 874. The change to Section 10-184 is profoundly discriminatory, and referring to Section 10-1600, changes are unnecessary. Homeschooling families should not have to register in person, just as no other students have to.

Lastly, I do not want the Board of Education pushing their inadequate curriculum on homeschoolers. The Board of Education is also not able to determine which curriculum or way of learning is best for my children, which I am able to assess, apply, and amend as necessary. Each of my children used various curriculum and ways of learning to best suit their needs and personal goals. Homeschooling isn't a box we keep our children in; it's a sacrifice we as parents make to prepare our children for the real world. That is our job. This is specifically why I am against Governor's Bill No. 874, particularly Section 17 (pages 20-21), making changes to Section 10-184, and Section 18 (pages 21-22), making changes to Section 10-1600.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tammy Podos

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