

Jessica L. Seymour
103 Cherry Circle
Groton, CT 06340
Re: Bill SB 874, Sections 17 & 18

February 27, 2018

Dear Connecticut Representatives and Education Committee Members,

I am writing in response to the proposed regulations regarding homeschooling of SB 874, specifically in reference to sections 17 and 18. Let me make it clear that I do not want nor do I need any government infringement upon my parental rights to take care of my family. I resolutely OPPOSE SB 874 in regards to homeschoolers.

As a Connecticut native, I have experienced the negative and lifelong repercussions of a public school education first hand. I have also been witness to the unchanged issues that seem to plague the system decades later as an adult, seeing my neighbors and friends struggle to raise their children in an atmosphere of bullying, drug abuse, cliques, and systemic financial shortcomings. It is my duty as a mother to protect my children from such emotional harms and choose for them what I feel is the best education available-- one that is provided by those closest to them, who love them unconditionally, and who want nothing but the very best for them in life. A home-based education is part of holistic lifestyle shared by the family, where a child's strengths, talents, and gifts are developed and then shared with our local community. It avoids heaping the undue burden of negative societal pressures as each student navigates the already challenging waters of childhood and adolescence. Homeschooling celebrates, educates, encourages, and empowers the individual to reach their highest potential. I think you'll agree that we need more of that in our communities and nation as a whole.

As parents, we have been our children's teachers since their first breath. Their care and upbringing is entrusted to us the moment they are laid in our arms. Homeschooling is simply a natural extension of this-- raising and educating the whole child, and seeing them blossom into a successful adult and respectable member of society.

Consider the positive statistics in regards to the success of homeschooled children. Homeschooled students consistently score higher than their public schooled peers on standardized tests-- typically 15 to 30 percentile points higher! A 2015 study found Black homeschool students scored 23 to 42 percentile points above Black public school students (Ray, 2015). The benefits of homeschooling spread throughout our communities, regardless of income level, class, race, religion, and gender. Homeschoolers are active in their communities. We are heavily involved in extracurricular activities such as martial arts, fine arts, sports, scouting, volunteer work, and even politics, as you will surely witness here at this hearing. Research has continuously shown that homeschooled individuals are more likely vote and be politically active, as well as less likely to be involved in drugs or other delinquent behaviors, and attend and excel in colleges at a higher rate than their peers.

The issue with abused children is an issue we should all be concerned with, certainly. However, requiring homeschoolers to register and put their names on a list in order to be monitored by DCF is not the answer. The highest rate of child abuse fatalities, roughly 71.8%, occurs in children under 3 years of age. The highest rate of child abuse overall (25.3% per 1,000 children) occurs with children who are not yet one year old. Children who are under 5, and therefore not even school aged yet, are among the highest risk. So you can see: This is not a homeschooling issue. The act of homeschooling has never been shown to increase the likelihood of child abuse occurring within a home. There is simply no data to support this erroneous claim. In reality, these abuse cases have nothing to do with homeschooling, with the parent or guardian neglecting the child on all fronts-- including their education. Therefore, the call for homeschoolers to submit to registration is, in all actuality, a call for government oversight of parenting in general. This is a grievous infringement of our personal rights and liberties here in this free nation.

I'd also briefly like to point out the illogical nature of this thinking. Never is a whole neighborhood subject to drug testing because one resident was found to be in possession of narcotics. Never do we subject all young adult males to registration because they are statistically more likely to engage in violent crimes. And so, punishing an entire demographic

community-- homeschoolers-- due to the unquestionably wrong actions of another, unrelated, individual is illogical at best. At worst, it's unconstitutional and one step closer to violating our 4th Amendment rights.

Because child abuse is a serious issue, I implore you to find an alternate means to solve the problem of overlooked and neglected children. Perhaps deeper involvement, improved training, and higher standards of accountability within the Department of Children & Families could be a first step. The abuse cases where neglected children (who already have open cases) being overlooked is more tied to the failings of that department than they are of the failings of homeschooling as a whole. I suggest a comprehensive investigation as to why these children are falling through the cracks and missed by their caseworkers in the first place. Why the need to cross-reference with a list of unrelated families? These are KNOWN abusive situations, and therefore these children should never be off the radar until they are without a doubt living in a safe, nurturing environment. Until then, it is the caseworker, and DCF at large, who should answer about the safety and security of said children. NOT Connecticut homeschoolers.

Therefore, I challenge you to consider what studies have shown us. Consider the lack of damning evidence against us. Consider the well-known and documented failures of a broken and already overburdened state department. I urge you to protect our freedoms and rights as a minority population. I implore you to solve the core issue with reason, awareness, and understanding of the root of the problem. I appeal to your good sense and urge you to vote NO on sections 17 & 18 of SB 874.

Thank you sincerely for your time.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jessica Seymour