

February 17, 2020

Dear Public Health Committee,

**I oppose HB-5044.** The Connecticut Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and a free and appropriate education for all children. According to the Connecticut Constitution, the State can only overrule these freedoms when it can prove, with empirical evidence, a **compelling interest** and when it can prove that it has applied the **least restrictive means** to meet that State interest. The burden of proof falls on the State. The State of Connecticut has failed to prove a compelling interest with empirical evidence. Rhetoric and popular opinion are not substantial enough to strip civil liberties. The State of Connecticut has failed to apply the least restrictive means to meet its interest. There are already measures in place to protect Connecticut citizens in the event of an outbreak that do not include stripping parental rights and removing healthy children from school.

Furthermore, this bill would potentially destroy the life of my grandchildren who are already in school and thriving healthy children. Homeschooling them would affect their family's financial support as one parent would have to quit their job or I would as a grandparent. They have thriving businesses in Connecticut and this would potentially undermine their stability. I am a clergy in the United Church of Christ and teach religious freedom and beliefs which should not be taken away by government. Freedom of religion and the rights of parents to choose proper health care for their children needs to remain in the hands of the parents with their provider.

**Protect religious freedom, parental rights and the fundamental right to a free and equal education. Vote No on HB-5044.**

Respectfully,  
The Reverend Donna Cassity  
Woodbury