

Peter Wolfgang, President
Family Institute of Connecticut Action
Testimony in Opposition to SB 1166



Family Institute of Connecticut Action opposes SB 1166, AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CLIMATE POLICY for the following reasons:

This bill, through the use of soothing language, is a “trojan horse” to force all school systems in Connecticut to adopt transformative social emotional learning programs that condition children to become social justice activists for progressive causes by manipulating children’s natural desire to be compassionate and supportive.

These programs are designed and approved by the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning, or CASEL. This organization has no direct connection to Connecticut school boards, parents or our children. Our duly elected board of education members, reportable to their local parents, must retain accountability and control over the “social and emotional” needs of children in their schools.

In particular, there are “5 competencies” to which every SEL curriculum is expected to adhere. (Sec 2(2) of the bill, according to Robert Jagers, vice president of research at CASEL, students need to categorize themselves and acknowledge their or another’s power, privilege and the systems and institutions that negatively or positively affect groups of people based on an identity. They are then

WORK ON COMPETENCIES

- Self-awareness (e.g., racial, class and gendered identities)
- Self-management (e.g., collective agency)
- Social awareness (e.g., belonging/**co-ownership**)
- Relationship skills (e.g., collaboration/**co-construction**)
- Responsible decision making (e.g., distributive justice/**collective well-being**)

directed (forced) to determine what role they will play to change society through their social justice activism. This is not appropriate as a mandate on all local boards of education, parents and children.

At highest risk for being labeled a “bully” in many SEL programs approved by CASEL, are children from religious or conservative backgrounds. Our children should not be labeled “bullies” through some engineered social emotional learning program adopted by the state. For example, reported to be from a SEL curriculum approved by CASEL, a middle school gender harassment lesson features a boy in makeup who expects other children to use “preferred pronouns” instead of adhering to their strongly held belief that there are only two genders, all in the name of “empathy and respect.”

Some parts of social emotional learning are commendable, but this is religious intolerance under the guise of emotional support. Our children cannot be forced to lie and this curriculum will be a tool to engage in an emotional war against traditional values.

Forced curriculum integrating unwanted lessons on gender fluidity are already being implemented across the state by various school districts including West Hartford, and that is their prerogative. Other school districts may choose to handle these topics in a manner outside of the “transformative social emotional” paradigm and should be given the same freedom while maintaining accountability to local parents.