

To the Members of the Education Committee

Re: HB 5468 *An Act Concerning the Provision of Equivalent Instruction*

Testimony:

We homeschooled all three of our children in Connecticut, starting 43 years ago. Our oldest was homeschooled for 4 years and then attended private Christian school and finally public high school. He is a software engineer and for many years has been a key manager for a defense contractor in Connecticut. We homeschooled our daughter from kindergarten to 12th grade. An honor student who received the Presidential Scholarship Award, she attended Albertus Magnus from which she then earned her MBA. She worked for several years as an audit analyst before starting the consulting company which she now runs. At night she is completing her dissertation for her Doctorate in Education. Our youngest was also homeschooled from K to 12 and besides being trained as a classical violinist as his extracurricular activity, he received a number of honors and was also awarded the President's Education Award for Outstanding Academic Excellence. He earned his bachelor's and then his Master of Divinity from Regent University (specializing in ancient languages). He completed his dissertation and received a Ph.D. at the age of 25 from Liberty University. He is currently an adjunct professor teaching multiple courses both on the undergraduate and graduate level for Grand Canyon University. Moreover, our two grandsons (6 and 8 years old), who are both homeschooled, have reading abilities that are superior to many public high school students we've encountered. We are relating this information to emphasize that homeschooling works!

It would seem that some of the legislators and bureaucrats in Hartford have a persistent and unnatural fixation on the dedicated parents who are homeschool. And now it appears that this year's attempt at control even includes those who send their children to private schools. This is especially peculiar given the recent studies revealing the large number of students that have experienced sexual misconduct from public school teachers, educators and other public-school staff and employees.

I refer you to the 2024 book by Charol Shakeshaft, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. Published by Harvard Education Press, she documents and analyzes the increasing prevalence rates of this public-school sexual misconduct in her book *Organizational Betrayal: How Schools Enable Sexual Misconduct and How to Stop It*. I believe the estimate of students in grade 8 -1 who experienced sexual misconduct by educators was 9.6% in 2004. This rose to 11.7% according to a study in 2020, and then to a staggering 17.4% in a 2023 study (documenting those who experienced one or more incidents of staff-to-student sexual harassment).

Other sources support her analysis. The Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct & Exploitation (SESAME) organization reports similar statistics on sexual abuse by teachers in state schools. Given the millions of students that attend these schools nationwide these percentages translate into a huge number of children being mistreated by those in trusted positions, and it is highly alarming that such a growing epidemic of gross misconduct by educators is not being addressed more vigorously by our elected officials and those in the governmental departments. Instead, the moms and dads who want the very best for their children and who sacrifice time and finances (even while they still have to pay their taxes to support the public school system, the well-paid educators, and the intrusive government officials) are the ones that are coming under the Committee's spotlight.

There is no reason to pass this bill and erode parental rights. It is clearly an overreach of governmental power that adds unnecessary bureaucratic burdens, shifts responsibility for a child's education from parents to the state, and which clearly is meant to discourage parents from homeschooling. Perhaps your committee should instead investigate why the poor children trapped in Connecticut's public schools are not receiving "equivalent instruction" to those who have the benefit of parents who care enough and have the ability to homeschool.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Pastor Gregory J. Scalzo, MBA

Mrs. Patricia L. Scalzo

43-year residents of Madison, CT and residents of CT since 1979