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State of Connecticut

SENATE

Testimony

Sen. Rob Sampson

Education Committee

March 11, 2026

SENIOR DEPUTY REPUBLICAN LEADER

RANKING MEMBER

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION &
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSING COMMITTEE

LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Opposition: H.B. 5468: An Act Concerning the Provision of Equivalent Instruction

Co-Chairs McCrory and Leeper, Vice-Chairs Winfield and Brown, Ranking Members Berthel and Zupkus, and members of the Education Committee:

I am submitting testimony in opposition to **H.B. 5468**.

This bill is presented as an attempt to address “equivalent instruction,” but in reality it represents yet another effort by government to insert itself into the lives of families who simply want the freedom to educate their children in the way they believe is best.

Parents have always had the primary responsibility for raising and educating their children. That is not a controversial idea. It is a foundational principle of a free society.

For decades, homeschooling families across Connecticut have demonstrated that they take that responsibility very seriously. These parents invest enormous time and effort into their children’s education. Many homeschool students go on to succeed academically, professionally and personally.

Yet bills like this treat those same families as if they are somehow suspect.

Instead of recognizing the success and dedication of homeschooling parents, this proposal adds new layers of bureaucracy, new reporting requirements and new opportunities for government oversight into families who are simply exercising their right to educate their children outside the public school system.

For example, the bill requires parents providing equivalent instruction to file intent forms with the local school district, provide annual continuation forms, and demonstrate the child’s academic work through portfolios, testing or other documentation submitted to the local board of education.

In other words, families who choose to educate their children at home are treated as though they must continually prove themselves to the state.

That approach reflects a troubling attitude.

It suggests that parents cannot be trusted to educate their own children without government supervision.

I hear from many families who homeschool their children, and I can tell you that they already feel under constant pressure from policies coming out of Hartford. Many of them believe the goal of proposals like this is

not simply oversight but intimidation. They feel like the state is trying to make homeschooling difficult enough that families will simply give up and return to the public school system.

I understand why they feel that way.

Because when you step back and look at the pattern of proposals targeting homeschooling families over the past several years, it begins to look less like support for education and more like hostility toward families who have chosen a different path.

And we should also acknowledge something else that is rarely discussed in these debates.

Many homeschooling families chose that path because the system failed them in the first place.

Some parents watched their children struggle in schools that were not meeting their needs. Some saw schools graduating students who still cannot read proficiently and asked themselves a very reasonable question: why would anyone want “equivalent instruction” to that?

Others simply wanted to avoid mandates, policies, or ideological agendas coming from the state that they did not believe were appropriate for their children.

Whatever the reason, these families made the decision to take responsibility for their children’s education themselves.

That attitude is wrong.

In a constitutional republic, government does not exist to micromanage the choices parents make about their children’s education.

Parents who choose equivalent instruction are not asking the state for funding, special privileges or exemptions. They are simply asking to be left alone to do what parents have always done: educate their children according to their values and their children’s needs.

Government should respect that choice, not treat those families like they are under investigation.

If anything, the success of many homeschooling students should remind us that parents are often the most motivated and capable educators their children will ever have.

Policies that burden those families with new mandates and bureaucratic hurdles do not strengthen education in Connecticut. They simply make it harder for families to exercise educational freedom.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject H.B. 5468.

Thank you for your consideration.



Rob Sampson
State Senator - 16th District