

March 11, 2026

Testimony of Peter Wolfgang, President, Family Institute of Connecticut Action in opposition to HB5468, An Act Concerning the Provision of Equivalent Education.



Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding House Bill 5468.

Family Institute of Connecticut truly appreciates the legislature's commitment to protecting children and ensuring that all students receive a quality education. However, HB 5468 raises significant concerns about privacy, effectiveness, and the allocation of limited state resources.

The bill would require families withdrawing their children from public school to undergo review by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), authorize sharing of student education records with state agencies, and impose new reporting and testing requirements on homeschool families and students attending non-accredited academies. These provisions raise constitutional concerns, potential conflicts with federal student privacy law, and serious questions about whether the bill would meaningfully improve child welfare or educational outcomes.

CT is not an outlier on homeschooling regulation.

It is important to recognize that Connecticut's current approach to homeschooling is not unusual when compared with other states. Homeschool regulation across the United States varies widely, with some states requiring testing and reporting while others impose minimal requirements beyond notification. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about **3.4% of K-12 students—roughly 1.7 to 1.8 million children nationwide—are homeschooled.**¹ Many states maintain relatively light regulatory frameworks, and Connecticut's approach falls well within the [range of policies](#) used nationwide. Before creating a new regulatory system that subjects thousands of families to state review and reporting requirements, it is important to ask whether the existing system is actually failing. There is little evidence that homeschooling in Connecticut is producing widespread educational failure or systemic child welfare problems that would justify sweeping new oversight.

Research on homeschooling outcomes suggests that many homeschooled students perform academically at or above national averages. A large national study published in the **Journal of School Choice** found that homeschooled students scored, on average, **15 to 25 percentile points above public school students on standardized academic achievement tests.**² Another peer-reviewed analysis concluded that homeschooled students "typically score well above average on standardized academic achievement tests."³ These findings do not mean that every homeschooling experience is perfect, but they do indicate that homeschooling as a sector is not experiencing widespread academic failure that would justify the level of government intervention contemplated by HB 5468.

Sharing information with DCF/SERC risks federal funds.

The bill would also require the sharing of student education records with the Department of Children and Families so that the agency can review whether a parent is already under supervision or receiving services and also the State Education Resource Center (SERC) if selected by a local BOE to determine if a family has achieved “equivalent instruction”(line 241).

These provisions raise concerns under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**, which protects the confidentiality of student education records. FERPA generally prohibits schools from disclosing “personally identifiable information from the student’s education records” without parental consent.⁴ Education records are broadly defined as records that contain information “directly related to a student” and maintained by a school.⁵ Congress created only narrow exceptions to this rule. One such exception allows disclosure to a child welfare agency only when that agency is legally responsible for the care and protection of the child and when the disclosure relates to the child’s case plan.⁶ The regulatory framework emphasizes that such disclosures must be tied to the agency’s responsibility for a child already involved in the child welfare system.⁷ HB 5468 appears to go beyond this limited framework by allowing records to be shared so the state can determine whether a family might already be involved with DCF. That approach risks transforming education records into a screening tool for investigations rather than protected educational records.

Families have valid reasons to be concerned about sharing information with DCF.

And Christian families have a right to be concerned. Depending on the level of specificity of information shared with DCF, which the bill does not limit, education records could include evidence of a family resisting a child’s “social transition” in school. A “social transition” is when a child adopts the name, clothes and mannerisms of the opposite sex in order to alleviate symptoms of gender dysphoria. Connecticut has had an [open policy of facilitating social transitions](#) in school, without medical oversight, and keeping that information secret from parents. Even socially transitioning children in open defiance of parental directives. We know that DCF has removed at least one child from their Christian home for failing to support a social transition, without any finding of abuse. There are other families afraid to speak publicly. See [testimony of Charles Smith against SB 295, 2026](#) and [testimony of Anonymous 59 against SB 295, 2026](#).

Some families homeschool to avoid the school’s transitioning their children without their consent and sharing that sensitive information with DCF is a source of great anxiety and continued grief for those families.

Using SERC to assess “educational equivalency” is concerning for many families.

One provision of HB 5468 that deserves careful attention appears in lines 237–244 of the bill. This section allows local boards of education to share the private education records of homeschooled students with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) in order to evaluate whether a family has made a sufficient “demonstration of equivalent instruction.”

SERC is a quasi-public organization that provides professional development and consulting services to Connecticut schools. Unlike traditional state agencies, it is not subject to the same public transparency requirements under the Freedom of Information Act. As a result, parents may have understandable concerns about how their children's educational records, portfolios, or other materials might be handled once shared with that organization.

In addition, many of the programs and trainings offered by SERC focus on areas such as diversity, equity, inclusion, gender identity policies, and LGBTQIA+ inclusive school environments. For example, SERC is currently offering a professional development series titled "*LGBTQIA+ Inclusive and Affirming Practices to Cultivate Belonging and Mattering*," which aims to help educators build inclusive classroom environments and develop trauma-informed practices that affirm LGBTQIA+ identities. While such programs may be appropriate for public school professional development, many families who choose homeschooling or faith-based education do so specifically because they wish to provide instruction consistent with their own religious or philosophical convictions.

HB 5468 would place those families in the position of having their educational materials reviewed by an organization whose educational philosophy may differ significantly from their own. This raises legitimate concerns about **fairness and neutrality** in the evaluation process. Parents who choose homeschooling often do so to preserve their ability to direct their children's moral and religious education. Requiring those families to demonstrate "equivalent instruction" to an outside organization that may not share or fully understand those values risks undermining parental trust.

For these reasons, legislators should carefully consider whether SERC is the appropriate entity to review homeschool portfolios or educational records, particularly when the families affected may have intentionally chosen educational paths outside of the public school system.

Constitutional concerns regarding suspicionless searches and parental direction in upbringing children.

The bill also raises constitutional considerations related to parental rights and family privacy. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that parents possess a fundamental constitutional right to direct the upbringing and education of their children. In **Troxel v. Granville**, the Court explained that "the interest of parents in the care, custody, and control of their children...is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized by this Court."⁸ Policies that subject families to investigatory screening without individualized suspicion of abuse or neglect raise serious questions about government intrusion into family autonomy and the parent-child relationship.

HB 5468, line 191, also raises constitutional concerns by effectively prohibiting families from withdrawing their children from public school if they have received services from the Department of Children and Families. DCF services often include voluntary counseling, family support, or other assistance that does not involve any finding of abuse or neglect. Conditioning a parent's ability to direct their child's education on whether the family has received such services risks

penalizing families simply for seeking help. The United States Supreme Court has long recognized that parents have a fundamental liberty interest in directing the upbringing and education of their children. A policy that categorically restricts educational choices for families who have interacted with DCF—without any individualized determination that homeschooling would endanger the child—raises serious questions about due process, equal treatment of families, and whether the state is intruding unnecessarily into the parent-child relationship. Legislators should carefully consider whether such a blanket restriction is constitutionally sound and whether it may unintentionally discourage families from seeking voluntary support services in the future.

Limited resources better spent on DCF, public and charter school responsibilities

Beyond the legal concerns, HB 5468 would likely divert limited state resources away from higher-priority needs. DCF already faces substantial caseload pressures investigating credible allegations of abuse and neglect. Requiring the agency to “review” families (line 178) who have not been accused of wrongdoing simply because they withdraw their children from public school risks diverting investigative resources from children who are already known to be in danger. Similarly, local school districts are currently addressing serious challenges in public education, including chronic absenteeism and significant reading proficiency gaps. Creating a new compliance and monitoring system for homeschool families—many of whom are successfully educating their children—may not represent the most effective use of public resources.

There is also reason to question whether expanded homeschool regulation would meaningfully improve child protection. Research consistently shows that child abuse is most often reported by medical professionals, neighbors, family members, and law enforcement—not by education oversight systems. According to the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Maltreatment Report**, the largest sources of abuse reports are professionals such as teachers, police, and medical providers, but many reports also come from neighbors, relatives, and community members.⁹ In other words, abuse detection occurs primarily through community interaction rather than through academic oversight systems such as curriculum reviews or portfolio submissions. As a result, expanding homeschool regulation is unlikely to function as an effective child protection tool and may instead impose burdens on families who are already acting in good faith.

Protecting children and ensuring educational opportunity are goals shared by policymakers and families alike. However, HB 5468 risks creating a regulatory system that imposes new burdens on families, raises serious privacy concerns, and diverts limited resources from higher-priority public needs without clear evidence that it will improve child safety or educational outcomes.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider and reject HB 5468.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources

1. [National Center for Education Statistics, *Homeschooling in the United States \(2023\)*](#).
2. [Brian D. Ray, "Research Facts on Homeschooling," *Journal of School Choice*](#).
3. Murphy, Joseph. "Homeschooling in America," *Educational Researcher*.
4. **20 U.S.C. §1232g(b)(1)** (FERPA disclosure prohibition).
5. **20 U.S.C. §1232g(a)(4)** (definition of education records).
6. **20 U.S.C. §1232g(b)(1)(L)** (child welfare disclosure exception).
7. **34 C.F.R. §99.38** (FERPA regulatory limitation for child welfare agencies).
8. **Troxel v. Granville**, 530 U.S. 57 (2000).
9. [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Child Maltreatment Report*](#).