



The Education Association of Christian Homeschoolers • 12 Sage Park Road • Windsor, CT 06095

To: Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams , Co-Chair  
Representative Jonathan Steinberg, Co-Chair  
Senator Saud Anwar, Vice Chair  
Senator Julie Kushner, Vice Chair  
Representative Jillian Gilchrest, Vice Chair  
Senator Tony Hwang, Ranking Member  
Senator Heather Somers, Ranking Member  
Representative William A. Petit, Ranking Member

From: Pam Lucashu, TEACH CT

Re: Testimony in Opposition to Section 1 of SB 1

Representative Steinberg, Senator Abrams and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, ***I ask you to remove Section 1 of SB 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.***

Section 1 provides for an exit interview with each student who withdraws from school under section 10-184. The purpose is to gather data regarding

- “(1) whether the student has a history of trauma,
- (2) whether the student's family has been reported to the Department of Children and Families or any other agency for ongoing stressors in the student's life or any needs of the student that are not being addressed,
- (3) the future plans of such student following such withdrawal,
- (4) whether the student has been the victim of bullying that caused a decline in academic achievement and resulted in such withdrawal, and
- (5) whether such student is trainable in skills that will provide financial independence.”

***The section is overly broad, needlessly intrusive, and could lead to unnecessary and damaging intervention into a student's life.***

In 2019, a bill was introduced to require registration of all homeschool students. Hundreds of homeschoolers testified in opposition to that bill as needlessly intrusive and the language was removed. At the time, there was discussion of whether or not the registrations would be used to cross-check information with DCF records. As I mentioned in my testimony regarding HB 874, if a child is currently under investigation by DCF, there is no need for *the school* to be tasked with following the child because “current law empowers DCF to address reasonable complaints of abuse and neglect.” <https://cga.ct.gov/2019/EDdata/Tmy/2019SB-00874-R000301-Lucashu,%20Pamela-In%20Opposition-TMY.PDF>

If, however, a child has at some time in the past been *reported* to DCF, it could have *resulted in a finding of no abuse or neglect*. Section 1's places undue significance on a report that may or may not have led to *substantiation of abuse or neglect*. The CT Mirror today reported that although there has been an increase in reports of educational neglect, "the actual cases of educational neglect was smaller than normal." <https://ctmirror.org/2021/03/15/thousands-of-students-didnt-show-up-for-school-this-year-where-did-they-go/>

As public defender Josh Mitchom stated in the CT Mirror article, *"Once DCF starts looking and they get into a family's life, they can find something," said Josh Mitchom, an attorney in the public defender's office that helps families intertwined with the state's child protection agency. "In the aggregate, it is not good. I'm sure we could find examples where a report of a child and family getting access to services leads to a good outcome. But I think calling DCF for most non-acute problems is like calling the police for a noise complaint. It is a blunt instrument ... They're not going to remove a kid for absenteeism — but it is a stressor on families that are already stressed. "*

Section 1 also lacks definitions that would help tailor services. What is "trauma"? Who will define it? Who determines whether bullying caused an academic decline or resulted in the withdrawal? Who and how is the determination made whether or not a student is trainable? The subjective nature of the questions presented and the data gathered provide an opportunity for some students to be targeted for services without adequate evidence of need.

The parent is the person best situated to make the decision on how and where to educate their child. Once the decision is made to withdraw that child from public school, the concern of the state ends. The school has had opportunity before the exit interview to determine whether or not the family should be reported to DCF, whether or not the student is trainable, and whether or not the student has been the subject of bullying. Collecting intrusive information at an exit interview needlessly weaponizes both the school system and DCF.

**Please remove Section 1 from Senate Bill 1.**