

CONNECTICUT PARENTS' RIGHTS COALITION

TESTIMONY AGAINST HB 5044

By: Attorney Deborah G. Stevenson
February 19, 2020

Good morning Chairmen and Members of the Public Health Committee. I am legal counsel for the **Connecticut Parents' Rights Coalition**, which is a coalition of **eleven** separate civic organizations representing **tens of thousands of parents** from all across the State of Connecticut. Collectively, we are here to express our **opposition to HB 5044**.

Your arguments for adoption of this bill, quite frankly, are fallacious and absurd.

Your argument for the bill: - *The religious exemption is being abused by people who don't belong to an organized religion, or whose organized religion has no dogma concerning vaccinations.*

Flaws in that argument: Neither the federal, nor the State Constitution, limit protection of religious freedom based on an organized religion or specific dogma. Both protect the unalienable right of an **INDIVIDUAL's** religious beliefs, whatever they are.

The federal Constitution precludes the government from "prohibiting the free exercise of religion", while the State Constitution says the "exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall forever be free to all persons in the State".

People exercising their individual religious beliefs are **NOT** abusing the religious exemption.

Your argument for the bill: *Public safety - Government needs to protect the children.*

Flaws in that argument:

The right to protect the children belongs to parents, not to the government. Protecting our own children is one of our unalienable rights that, according to the Declaration of Independence, we were "endowed by our Creator". That document says that "governments are instituted among men" to "**secure these rights**", not to destroy them, or to chip away at them, little by little.

Even if you adopt the bill, you still are not "protecting" the children.

You have not protected them from the unvaccinated adults in the building - the teachers, the janitors, the cafeteria staff, or the visitors who come into the building.

You haven't protected them from the unvaccinated people they come into contact on field trips either.

You haven't protected the busloads of school children who arrive in this building, almost daily, to visit you, to shake your hands, and to go into every important room at the Capitol.

Adopting this bill in the name of "protecting the children" is a farce.

By your logic, if you actually were protecting the children, then you, all of you, in this building should go, right now, and get all vaccinations on the schedule, in accelerated fashion, so that the school children who visit you would be protected from you, as soon as possible.

In reality, though, you won't do that, because this is not really a bill to protect the children. It is nothing more than a simple attack on religious freedom and parental rights. For that reason, it is wholly **unacceptable**.

II. Aside from that, the consequences of the bill, after adoption, are enormous, and, remain unaddressed.

Think about this logically.

- a. The bill might preclude unvaccinated children from attendance at public schools and their programs, but parents still have the right **not** to vaccinate their children.
- b. The State Constitution still provides that “**all**” school children have the **right to a free appropriate public education**, regardless of whether they are vaccinated or not.
- c. The bill **does not, and cannot, amend the State Constitution**. “All” school children still have a right to a free appropriate public education. The State cannot escape its Constitutional duty.
- d. **How, then, will the State provide that free appropriate public education to those unvaccinated school children who want that public education?**

Will the State have to build new facilities for unvaccinated children to receive their free public education if they cannot receive it in existing public schools?

Will the State have to send public school teachers into the individual homes of the unvaccinated children who want their right to a free appropriate public education?

Will the the taxpayers in the towns and cities across the state have to increase their property taxes to fund any alternative means of providing unvaccinated children with a free appropriate public education?

How will the State and towns comply with federal IDEA special education law, if unvaccinated special needs children are not allowed to receive their free appropriate public education in the public, and non-public, schools?

Will the State and towns have to hire more special ed teachers to provide that education to those children in their homes?

Will the State lose its federal funding if it does not provide the special education to the unvaccinated children in their homes?

Exactly what will be the cost - constitutionally, financially, or otherwise - to the State, the towns, the taxpayers, and the children?

Until you have the answers to all of these questions, you have no business adopting this bill. The consequences of your actions will be enormous, Constitutionally, financially, and politically. These questions demand answers before you act.

The parents of this state demand that you do your job to protect and secure our rights.
The **Connecticut Parents’ Rights Coalition** urges you to

Vote NO to HB5044, or you may regret the consequences for a very long time.

We unite to protect parental rights.

NHELD-National Home Education Legal Defense
Family Institute of Connecticut
TEACH CT-The Education Association of Christian Homeschoolers
CHN-Connecticut Homeschool Network
AbleChild, Informed Consent, Label & Drug Free Education
Connecticut Against Common Core
CUSP- CT Unites for Student Privacy
Student Data Privacy: A Voice for the CT Children of P20 Win
Quiet Corner Parents for Education
New Milford United for Kids
Stop Common Core in New Milford

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