

Senate Testimony, H.89

March 23, 2023

My name is Annie Wilson. I was born in Vermont and raised on my family's dairy farm in Cornwall, Vt. I went to school at Lyndon State College and then UVM to be a teacher. I have taught school and coached soccer in Vermont. Two years ago I retired.

I was a teacher for 34 years. Over the last few years I saw a great shift in education. The focus was leaning away from subject matter, the intellect and learning of knowledge, and more toward the emotional and social aspects of the child. I will cite examples of this.

I am sending this testimony in opposition of H.89. Before I get into the subject, I'd like to ask. When did our Vermont legislature stop working on tax policies and begin dictating to us how to raise our children? What has happened to our freedom to choose? Why do we feel coerced to see only one side of the coin? How is it that the legislature spends their time and our tax dollars to abolish parental rights, instead of dealing with the question of why farmers are going out of business? This bill is another example of this very issue.

Two years ago I retired. Here are two examples of what I saw and experienced in my last year of teaching.

The middle and high school participated in Pride week. Students were showing their pride with how they dressed, styled their hair and so forth. They would drape a rainbow flag over their shoulders. Teachers would encourage students to show their pride. However, a few students draped a political flag over their shoulders because they were proud of their political party. I saw how the teachers reacted by making these students put away their flags and if they didn't obey would be sent to the time out room in the school. The message was pretty clear, students were not allowed the freedom of free thinking unless it fit into the narrative of what the teachers felt was allowed to be pride and what wasn't allowed.

Another example, during Pride Week. Some students were upset that they were being forced to participate in the activities. I spoke out on their behalf that they should be given an alternative place to go. In response, they were allowed to watch a movie. I took some students outside and played some games. Some students had gone to participate after being manipulated by their teachers and decided they wanted to rejoin the alternative activities. The teachers made those students stand in front of the group and

say why they wanted to leave. These were 7th grade students! This kind of teaching is unacceptable! This is what I would deem bullying. The 'do as I say' rule was evident.

So this brings me to the topic of H.89.

My first question, as a teacher I had to do the mandatory reporting training. If I had seen or heard about any child abuse I was mandated to report this to my principal. Under H.89, how would this look? If I witnessed "(a) An adult person, a parent, or a legal guardian..." influencing a minor in gender-affirming services or manipulating minors to participate in activities they did not want to, wouldn't I be obligated to report them? But now, H.89 says this is acceptable. That "(a) An adult person, a parent, or a legal guardian..." is allowed to influence a minor and manipulate minors to participate in activities they don't want to. Bullying is acceptable as long as it fits the narrative to what, in this case Pride Week is, according to the powers that be.

We know that students look up to, admire and idolize their teachers. What happens when a teacher or counselor, "(ii) is a person providing, assisting another person in obtaining, or obtaining for themselves reproductive health care services or gender-affirming health care services in this State", manipulates and influences minors? H.89 protects them, but who protects the student? We can see that mandatory reporting will not work under this shield bill.

And I will go back to my original questions: why is it the legislators' jobs to make laws that prohibit parental rights? When did this become their authority? How is this helping Vermonters afford their property taxes or reduce the stress on farmers and the restrictions to farm? How is this keeping Vermont the state that it once was, a place to enjoy and be enjoyed?

Clearly this bill among others shows a lack of respect for parents and for Vermont and sadly and most severely, the students and children of our, what used to be, a great state.

Please consider the negative impact that this bill will have on students, children, youth and ultimately Vermont. I urge you to oppose H.89.

Respectfully submitted by

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