



NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL
530 MAIN STREET P. O. BOX 315
NEW HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06057
OFFICE (860) 379-8546 FAX (860) 738-1766

Jeffrey Sousa

Superintendent
of Schools

Michael Lynch

Director of Student
Services

Amy Kennedy

Principal Bakerville & New
Hartford Elementary

Kelly Carroll, Ed.D.

Principal Ann Antonini
School

Testimony in Opposition to HB 5468 (As Currently Proposed)
Submitted by Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa
New Hartford Public Schools

Good afternoon Senator and Representative Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jeffrey Sousa and I serve as the Superintendent of the New Hartford Public Schools. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **opposition to HB 5468 as it is currently written.**

While I understand the intent of the legislation, to improve accountability and ensure student welfare, HB 5468 creates significant operational, legal and administrative burdens for local school districts without providing the necessary resources or infrastructure to implement these requirements effectively.

First, the bill creates a formal statutory framework for “equivalent instruction” and requires districts to administer an annual intent-to-educate form beginning in 2028, including tracking whether families enroll in public school, nonpublic school, or homeschool. Districts would be responsible for collecting and verifying documentation annually. This represents a substantial expansion of district administrative duties that are currently handled through informal guidance and local practice.

Second, the bill requires annual continuation forms and district follow-up procedures when documentation is not submitted. Districts must attempt contact with families multiple times and report non-compliance to the state. These compliance tracking responsibilities place school districts in a regulatory enforcement role that is not traditionally part of our educational mission.

Third, HB 5468 requires families providing equivalent instruction to submit academic evidence such as portfolios, standardized test results, or other coursework documentation between March and June each year. This would require district personnel to receive, review, and evaluate academic materials from homeschool families, creating unclear expectations around who performs the review, what criteria are used, and what happens if districts determine the evidence is insufficient. The bill does not establish funding, training, or standardized evaluation protocols to support districts in this responsibility.

Fourth, the bill requires districts to coordinate with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families when a student is withdrawn for equivalent instruction. Under the proposal, districts must request a review to determine whether the parent is under protective supervision or receiving protective services and in certain cases the withdrawal may not take effect. While protecting children is absolutely paramount, this provision places school districts in the middle of child protection determinations, which are more appropriately managed by trained child welfare professionals.



Additionally, the legislation expands data collection and reporting requirements to the Connecticut State Department of Education regarding the number of students receiving equivalent instruction and participating in district programs. While data can be valuable, the bill again adds reporting obligations without providing administrative support or funding.

Finally, the bill requires districts to provide partial enrollment opportunities allowing homeschooled students to take up to two courses and participate in extracurricular activities and athletics. While expanding opportunities for students is commendable, this provision raises complex issues related to scheduling, eligibility, staffing, class capacity, and equitable resource allocation for districts already facing staffing shortages and budget constraints.

In summary, HB 5468 represents a major shift from informal guidance to a highly structured statutory system governing homeschooling in Connecticut. However, the bill places significant new responsibilities on local school districts, including:

- Managing statewide homeschool registration and continuation forms
- Conducting compliance follow-ups
- Reviewing academic instructional evidence
- Coordinating with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families
- Expanding participation opportunities for homeschooled students
- Reporting new statewide data to the Connecticut State Department of Education

All of these duties would be implemented without additional staffing, funding, or guidance for districts.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to reconsider HB 5468 in its current form and work collaboratively with school districts, families, and state agencies to develop a more balanced approach that protects students while remaining feasible for local districts to implement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Jeffrey Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public School