

To the editor:

I am appalled by the most recent letter to the editor from my state representative, John Sellers. Mr. Sellers won his election (by 4 votes) and now represents the towns of Hebron, Bridgewater, Bristol, Alexandria, Grafton, Canaan, Enfield, Orange, Dorchester, and Groton in the NH House.

Mr. Sellers “strongly” urges parents to remove their children from “government public schools.” He urges parents to homeschool their children saying it doesn’t take much time and the older ones can help the younger ones. He also advises parents to take advantage of the (so-called) Education Freedom accounts which send our school tax dollars to families who apply for these health freedom grants. What better way to dismantle public education in NH than taking our tax dollars and paying those funds out to families who are dissatisfied with public education and wish to home school or send their kids to private or religious schools?

What has led Mr. Sellers, who until this year served on the Newfound School District budget committee, to these rash statements? Simply, it is because of the failure of the NH House to pass SB272, the Parental Rights bill. Had this bill passed, teachers, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, the school nurse, and administrators would be required to report to parents anything told to them by a child in confidence (or not).

Parents would have the right to inspect any class materials (and opt their child out), exempt their children from immunizations and opt out of health or sex education. And very importantly, teachers would be required to disclose changes to a student’s gender identity absent “clear and convincing” evidence that sharing the information could lead to abuse. (NH Bulletin) LGBTQ youth are at a much higher risk of abuse and suffer significantly more mental health challenges as evidenced by hours of testimony from the LGBTQ community at legislative public hearings.

Additionally, teachers could be sued by parents for not fulfilling requests for information about their child.

NH’s public school districts and the day-to-day work of teachers paraprofessionals, and yes, even parent volunteers, all help to educate our children.

Bills like SB272 and last session’s “divisive concepts” bill make it more difficult for teachers to teach as they need to spend more time worrying about being sued by a few disgruntled parents. Additionally, education freedom accounts take needed funding away from public schools.

I support public education. Without a well-informed and educated citizenry, the future of our state, country and the planet is in jeopardy.

Suzanne Smith
Former state rep - Hebron