

Email from individual regarding the Legislative Consent: Children's Wellbeing and Schools

I am writing about the provisions affecting home educators in the CWS Bill.

It is a central flaw in this bill that it pays no regard to the voice of the child.

It is also remarkable that the government has chosen a confrontation with home educators, instead of generative engagement.

Of course children must be kept safe. But the CWS Bill contravenes basic human rights, and it will likely not even be effective in protecting those children truly in need, while at the same time obstructing and even preventing a good education outside of school for so many.

Home educators are, in the main, diligent people who care very deeply and provide very effectively for their children - often in circumstances where the state has been unable to provide a suitable education for the child in question. Local authorities, by contrast, are inevitably administrators, short on time, expertise and insight. The focus should be on the child's voice, and this will be undermined where the focus is instead on satisfying a local authority employee who does not know the child and cannot (based on experience in various different LAs) be relied on to understand the breadth of approaches that constitute a good education.

In any event, the reporting requirements are likely to prove practically unworkable.

Further, the regrettably confrontational stance taken in the bill may deter those who need help (or indeed medical care) from asking for it, and the failure to engage openly with home educators is a missed opportunity to craft a framework that would truly protect and uplift children.

Existing systems - in particular, education and social services - are painfully underfunded and unable to deliver on their obligations; and this constitutes a substantial problem for safeguarding. It is also questionable how well the school system is protecting children's mental health and preparing them for life. The government should properly fund, and fix the holes in, existing systems, and think constructively (not oppositionally) about how best to identify those in need of further support or protection.

Moreover, with the growing sense of unease about the developing political landscape, legislation that has authoritarian leanings is concerning.

I would be happy to meet to discuss. I would in any event like to receive a substantive response that indicates the government is engaging with the concerns raised, rather than one of the dismissive responses that have been given to others.