

The Connecticut General Assembly



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Rep. McCarthy Vahey, Fairfield Residents Participate in Student Privacy Bill Signing

Praises efforts of Fairfield resident at ceremonial signing

Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey (D-Fairfield) and Fairfield resident Jenn Jacobsen participated in a ceremonial bill signing on July 13 for a law to protect student privacy by imposing certain restrictions on the use and sharing of student data. PA 16-189, An Act Concerning Student Data Privacy, will go into effect on October 1.

The law restricts how student information may be used by contractors, consultants, and operators of websites, online services, and mobile applications for schools. Companies will be required to specify how they will secure student data and will be prohibited from using student data for advertising unless authorized by their contract.

“It was great to see a bill that originated from the concerns of a Fairfield parent and advocate signed by the Governor today. Jennifer Jacobsen has been the driving force in our state bringing the issue of student data privacy to light,” **Rep. McCarthy Vahey** said. “Websites, mobile apps, and other online services are important tools for facilitating classroom learning, but we need to ensure that students’ personal information is secure. This law will give families the peace of mind that taking advantage of online services doesn’t come at the cost of their children’s privacy.”

Jennifer Jacobsen is a former educator and the founder of the Fairfield-based grassroots advocacy group Connecticut Alliance for Privacy in Education (CAPE). Her interest in student privacy began when she noticed that an online school textbook was being used to solicit donations from her daughter.

“What began as a passion became a venture into my own education in how student information, used as a tool to help our educators, can also pose risks,” Jacobsen said. “Along with many other concerned parents, I began to advocate for a state law that would

serve to protect the children of our state. We are grateful for the help from key legislators, like Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey and Rep. Gail Lavielle of Norwalk, who helped the legislature to understand the importance of student data privacy legislation. The result is a very good law that marks an important first step for Connecticut's students and families and keeps the door open for future dialogue.”

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