

Testimony in Opposition to SB291

Distinguished Senate Education Committee Members:

My name is Britney Moss and I am twenty-one years old. Along with my younger sister, I was homeschooled in Bozeman, MT by our mother, Dorothy Moss. I want to give you a short account of my experience as a home school student and how I believe it has positively impacted my life.

My mother began teaching me at home when I was four-years-old. From an early age, she recognized in me a unique propensity for learning and a curiosity about the way the world works. I was especially interested in biology and medicine, and my mom was able to direct special attention to this area of interest in my curriculum and help me foster and enjoy these interests. My sister took an interest in ballet and her homeschool schedule allowed her to devote extra time to this pursuit. She has finished high school and now dances with the Atlanta Ballet Co. I feel blessed to have been able to spend so much quality time with my parents and sister learning and exploring our interests together. I believe this contributed greatly to the close, supportive relationships that we all share now.

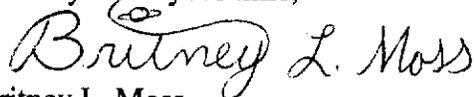
I believe that my time spent homeschooling taught me many valuable skills. My mother made sure that I was involved in social interactions both with my peers and with people much older and younger than myself. She felt it was very important that I learn how to interact and converse with people of a variety of ages, a skill which I use daily as a scientist who needs to convey my research both to fellow scientists in my field and to the public. My public speaking skills began being honed at a very early age when I began giving special lectures and demonstrations at local schools, homeschool groups, and science camps regarding my experiences at space camps and my knowledge of astronomy and space sciences. During four of my years in middle school and high school, I was a volunteer at the Taylor Planetarium at the Museum of the Rockies. During this time I assisted in office work and show-production. I also traveled with the StarLab inflatable planetarium to local schools, and was in charge of the Star Station One education program which reached school groups and museum visitors with entertaining and informational demonstrations about life and work on the International Space Station. Around this same time I also took an avid interest in golf and competed in and won many local and state tournaments and participated with the Gallatin Valley Homeschool Golf Team.

When I was fourteen, I decided that I would like to take an astronomy class at MSU-Bozeman and my mother assisted me in taking care of all of the necessary paperwork and details to begin taking classes at MSU while still in high school (something which many of my homeschooled and private schooled friends also did). The next semester I took biology and biotechnology, and the semester after that chemistry. I found that my homeschool education had prepared me well for the college environment, especially my discipline for self-study and my social skills. During this time I was still completing other subject studies at home. Whenever I had a question or an interest that my parents could not answer or assist me with, they always found a friend, community member, or MSU student/professor who could work with me on this. This often led to great field trips, which gave me a good sense of how what I learned in school could be applied in various careers and hobbies. Prior to my senior year I was awarded a NASA Sharp PLUS internship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and got my first taste of biomedical research, and realized I was hooked. I decided to apply for early entrance at MSU

and was awarded the prestigious Presidential Scholarship at the age of sixteen. I immediately dove into challenging coursework in both the biochemistry major and the honors program degree option, and earned a degree from each and graduated with a 4.0 GPA. My freshman year I began working in Jean Starkey's lab studying cancer biology and have continued working with her for nearly five years. I have presented my research at several peer review science conferences across the country and have been awarded numerous grants to support this research and travel. In 2002 I was nominated for and received the esteemed Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. I worked for the Montana Space Grant Consortium for all four years at MSU, and my final year with them I developed and coordinated a statewide Mars exploration education program. At the end of this letter, I have included a list of honors and activities from my tenure at MSU-Bozeman.

In the fall of 2005 I will begin attending graduate school at Washington University Medical School in St. Louis, MO to earn a Ph.D. in Cell and Molecular Biology with an emphasis on cancer. In my career, I feel that I will be able to make significant contributions to the field of cancer biochemistry by setting up my own academic research lab to investigate and develop new methods of cancer treatment and/or improve upon methods currently in use. I also feel that by using my gifts for public speaking and teaching that I can inspire a new generation of scientists to explore their interests and develop the critical thinking skills that will enable them to excel in their chosen field. Ultimately, I want to use the compilation of my knowledge and skills to conduct research as a NASA mission specialist astronaut.

Thank you for your time,



Britney L. Moss

HONORS: 2003-2004 MSU Septemviri member; 2003-2004 MSU Mortar Board Senior Honor Society Member; 2000-2001 MSU Chemistry/Biochemistry Department Outstanding Freshman Award Recipient Outstanding Freshman Award Recipient; MSU Chemistry/Biochemistry Department Frederich Kekule' Award given to the sophomore major judged outstanding on the basis of scholarship and professional promise; Dr. & Mrs. Chi-Tang Li Scholarship Recipient; MSU Chemistry/Biochemistry Department Fry Scholarship awarded to an outstanding student who plans to pursue a career in professional chemistry/biochemistry; 2002 & 2003 Recipient of an MSU Undergraduate Chemistry Society Travel Grant; 2001 National Society of Collegiate Scholars Merit Award Recipient; 2002 Recipient of MSU Day of Student Recognition A.L. Strand Award in honor of leadership, scholarship, and service.; MSU President's List, Fall 2000-present; 2001 Golden Key National Honor Society Top 100 MSU Sophomores honoree; 2003 Golden Key National Honor Society/Ford Motor Company Scholarship.

ACTIVITIES: President, Undergraduate Chemistry Society, 2001-2002 (planned club mtgs; ran Chemistry demo show program for local schools; member recruitment; MSU Orientation booth); Education Outreach Director, Undergraduate Chemistry Society, 2002-2003 (organized chemistry demo shows for local schools and for educational events); Vice-President, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, 2002-2003 (coordination of the Planning For College Success 8th grade mentoring program); Historian, Honors Student Committee, 2000-2002 (organized dance; planned fund-raisers; MSU Friday outreach booth); Community Service/Academic Activities Chairperson, Golden Key International Honor Society MSU Chapter, 2003-2004 (in charge of organizing community service projects and academic events); Physics Department Peer Instructor for Phys 205 (assisted students in physics lab; graded exams; attended weekly staff mtgs); Expanding Your Horizons in Math & Science Group Leader, April 2001 (group leader for 10-15 middle school children); Holzer/Peak Performance Leadership Conference, 10/20-21/01 (Participated in conference activities aimed at cultivating leadership skills); 2001 Montana Space Odyssey Summer Camp Guest Speaker/Reunion Supervisor.