

SEN'T. EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 92

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February 14, 2005

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Educational Committee, thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. My name is Kathryn Hainsworth, a homeschooling mother, a former Montana Public School Teacher and member of a 70-family inclusive homeschool group in the Gallatin Valley.

Although I generally vote Democratic, families who homeschool are represented in every political party which exists today. We come from all religious backgrounds and educational philosophies. However, we all share one common belief, homeschooling is the most effective education for our children.

We do not choose to educate them at home to neglect their education, but rather to create an educational environment that is specifically suited to the needs of each child. Education in the public schools is adequate, but it does not necessarily meet the needs of each individual child. By allowing home education to be free from restrictions, it is free to form itself in such a way that best meets the needs of the children within each family.

We do not choose to educate our children at home to isolate them, but rather to provide them a rich experience of social opportunities which span generations and are appropriate for the individual children. One of the first concerns voiced to a homeschooling family is generally, "What about socialization?" It is my belief that homeschooling provides an infinite amount of natural social opportunities. The children visit the library where they interact with the librarians, they participate in homeschooling gatherings with other families, they apprentice with adults as they learn new skills, and they volunteer at the local museums among other activities. Spending the day with a group of people who are the same chronological age is not typical of what social interactions are like in society.

Imposing standardized testing will not improve home education; it will only complicate the educational system that is already overburdened. Even the National Academy of Sciences has issued a statement that major educational decisions should not be based on a test score. Basing important decisions on a test score will encourage home educators to teach-to-the-test rather than meet the needs of the individual child. As it has done with the Leave No Child Behind Act, it will limit the content of the education by forcing educators to focus on "the test".

I cannot find ANY EVIDENCE that the extreme regulations in this bill will improve a child's education or their safety. However, there is a large body of evidence that homeschooling provides an excellent education because parents are devoted to their children and are committed to helping them become the best independent individuals they can be. Perhaps concerns pertaining to child abuse would best be met by more fully funding the laws pertaining to social services. The laws currently in place pertaining to homeschooling are working. I see no need to change them.

Thank you,
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