February 14, 2005

SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 32
DATE 2-14-05
BILL NO. SB-291

Jeffrey S. Ullrey
PO Box 348
Helena MT 59604
(406) 443-8727

RE: SB291

Dear Committee Members,

The subject of home education is often one of great controversy in regards to our state's desire to ensure a quality education for our children. It is with this in mind that I write to you regarding SB291. Although I understand Senator Ryan's desire to make sure all Montana's children receive a quality education, SB291 is not the tool to provide this assurance.

Section 5: As a graduate of a home school I can assure you that home educated students receive a quality education. In regard to Section 5, parental qualifications of this magnitude are not necessary. Today there exists a number of accredited distance learning high schools as well as other programs designed to aid the parent in teaching their children at home, resources that I utilize for teaching my own children. When I graduated from home school these tools were not in existence, yet my parents instilled in me what was needed to attend college and earn a B.A. in counseling with honors. I am now completing a graduate program which will result in a Doctor of Arts in counseling, going on to become a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. The presence or lack of "traditional training" does not determine a parent's ability to properly instruct their children. One must also ask what the definition of "supervise" means. My wife, who is the primary instructor in our home school, does not posses a baccalaureate degree. In order to comply with this law and avoid the requirements of Section 7 would I need to become the primary instructor or could she continue under my supervision? This term needs to be defined.

Section 8 subsection 1: This section presents a paradox within the law. Pursuant to MCA 20-7-111 the compulsory enrollment age of children is until their 16th birthday yet Section 8 requires testing beyond that age. Why? Does this law establish a lower standard of education for public schools simply because they are public? Why test at all? Studies have shown that eighth grade home school students consistently score, on average, in the 87th percentile. This study did not discriminate between white and minority students; in fact it sought to compare the test results of these two classifications. The findings for white, black, and hispanics were the same, consistently high. In comparison public schooled blacks scored in the 24th percentile for math and 28th percentile for reading. Hispanics scored 29th in math and 28th in reading and white students scored 58th in math and 57th in reading (Farris, Michael P.; October 22, 2004; Academic Statistics on Home schooling). With these scores, coming from states that do require testing, why should the State of Montana require testing at all? Haven't home educators proven their ability to

give their children a quality education? This testing would prove to be a burden for both the school system and the parents.

Section 8 subsection 2: If in the unlikely event that a remediation plan is needed why should the parents be required to pay for the plan? Has it not been considered that property taxes are already being paid for an educational service that is not being utilized? Why place an additional burden on the taxpayer? It is not necessary.

Senators, I have only touched on a few points of SB291 that have significant difficulties, for the sake of time I will refrain from expressing additional concerns. Sufficient to say I am asking that you stop SB291 from going to the Senate floor for a vote. The provisions of this bill are not needed and intrusive to those who are providing the best education possible for their children.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey S. Ullrey M.A. (Candidate)
Family Counselor (Under supervision)