

SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 47
DATE 2-14-05
BILL NO. SB-291

David and Kathleen Gehrke
1700 First Ave N.
Great Falls, MT
59401

Dear Senators,

I wanted to share with you my absolute opposition to SB291. I home school five of my children under the guidelines set by the law. I also have a daughter in Great Falls Public High School and two adult sons. I began home schooling four years ago, partly because the school was not designed to meet the needs of some of my children.

I am an adoptive parent who had spent ten years teaching other adoptive parents and foster parents how to be successful. One of my primary goals as a parent is to find ways for my children to reach their highest success. Working at home with my children allows us to have more freedom with learning styles and methods. We are known as eclectic home schoolers, meaning we use curriculum from many sources. Meeting each child's need and interest.

To share one of my stories, and I have many, my son who is 11 was in almost full time special education. At IEP meetings the special education teacher told me there was no key to unlock the potential of the learning disabled. She said you just kept repeating and some days they got it others they did not.. Because of our work at home first my son feels every bit as competent as his peers. Second those skills that really challenged him in reading and math he is now getting a complete understanding of, because I could take him at a level he was ready for. He also believes himself to be a great inventor and scientist and is full of creative confidence. He has submitted several ideas to Inventors Corporation of America.

I share this with you to let you know that mandatory testing and forcing children with learning disabilities back into the public system is not in their best interest. Parents who take their children home are willing to go to any lengths to find success for their kids. Mandatory testing would require us to teach for a test not for what the child is ready for and in a way the helps each child develop to their potential. Also the proposed testing environment would make any home schooled kid panic.

I am not opposed to sharing a portfolio of my children's accomplishments with perhaps a county superintendent of schools. I would very much like to be able to use that superintendent as a resource of ideas and suggestions. Those things would enhance our experience as home schoolers.

We already have in place laws that have us register and places the responsibility of our children's education on us as parents. I ask that you allow us to fulfill that responsibility, with out cutting us off at the feet by mandating things that would only hurt our children.

Please do not pass Senate Bill 291.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Schuk