

Dear Senate Education Committee Member,

February 13, 2005

I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 291. I have several questions to ask regarding this bill which should at the same time define why I am opposed to the bill. My intention is not to be impolite but I am going to be blunt.

First, why is SB 291 needed? In Section 1, the name alone suggests that the bill is to pursue two things: 1) "quality" in home schooling and 2) the "protection" of children who are home schooled. The introduction of this bill suggests that we need both "quality" and "protection" of home schooled children. Likewise this bill would suggest there is currently a serious home school quality problem and certain danger to home schooled children in the state.

Is there a lack of quality? How bad is it? Is the quality problem well documented? Are there data and statistics to back up this quality problem? I have been involved in home schooling my children and in so doing have networked with many home school families and have attended two Montana State Home School Conventions. It surprises me that being as involved as I am I have not become aware of the "lack" of quality in home schooling or the significant danger that these children are in that requires protection by law. In fact, I have seen quite a different picture.

And what is the danger? What "protection" do these children need? I am not suggesting that children do not need protection. Is that not the foremost thought in your mind with your OWN children, that you need in some way or another to protect them? Funny thing, but I believe this is a reason many parents home school. That is, to protect their children from things they do not feel are in their children's best interest. So what is this bill protecting home school children from? Are there not currently laws on the books that protect children, even home school children? How many children are in danger? What is the danger? Again, where is the substantial evidence of this danger? Where is the evidence that shows a danger so great that a law must be written for one specific group of people?

Section 5. This bill suggests that parents without a license to teach or a baccalaureate degree are not qualified to teach their children, at least not without the oversight of a monitor. In other words, no degree, can't teach. Degree, you are qualified to teach. Simple as that, nothing else required. Does this hold true in business? Only people with a college education can succeed in business? We all know this to be false. Likewise we all know of certified teachers who can't teach! I also personally know many people who have no college education and do a fantastic job of home educating their children. Again, what are the statistics? People who educate their children may not have degrees. What they do have is incentive, determination, passion, concern and love. Quite simply this section is an insult to these parents.

The monitor in Section 7. is a frightening thought. If there is no statistical proof that parents without teaching certificates or college degrees are not qualified to educate their children then this is a legalized invasion of privacy. What would happen if you tried that with other groups of people in the state? Such a thought is outrageous, but it is the very thing this bill proposes to do to this one group of people, the home schoolers. They become guilty until proven innocent.

If you are trying to go after delinquent parents and children, (the ones who are not in school and are not being schooled at home even if they claim as much) then do not pass a law that punishes the people who are working so hard and doing such a good job at educating and loving their children. This law would do nothing to help truant children and negligent parents. It would do much to hurt the rest of us.

Sincerely,


David Rasmussen

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 49

DATE 2-14-05

BILL NO. SB-291