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SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 57

DATE 2-14-05

BILL NO. SB-291

Senate Education Committee Members
Helena, Montana

Dear Member of the Committee,

I am a twelve-year-old Montana homeschooler. I am in sixth grade. I am writing because I oppose Senate Bill 291. Thank you for reading my testimony.

When I was seven, I went to kindergarten. Most of what was taught I had already learned at home with my mom. I was being drawn away from my family and from the values of being a good daughter, older sister, and someday a mother. But most of all, I was being drawn away from an experience of my own with my God. I was developing a rebellious attitude, and was not very willing to submit to authority. Looking back, I am not proud of the way I was acting.

So, when I was ready for first grade, my mother decided to teach me and my little sister at home. I learned very quickly, and in a matter of weeks was reading. I was enthralled with this new ability! In kindergarten, I had never had anyone attempt to teach me the basics of reading. When I started homeschooling, I realized that learning is real, and that I could do it.

I have now been home schooling for six years, and love it. It has been the best experience I could ever have. I have a wonderful teacher (my mother), and together we are growing to love and learn together. I love math, and that is something that I had a terrible time comprehending in the beginning. But with a lot of patient love and teaching from my parents, I am now able to say that I love that which I hated, and that is very true in many other things in my life. My mom and dad have helped me to slowly understand that learning is a gift. I get more and more excited every day as I learn new things that were once difficult.

When we first started homeschooling, we were rather unsure of where to start. But as my mother did some research on the subject, we slowly but surely started on this road that has changed my life. I would also like to share that my little brother and sister (ages five and six) are reading and doing math, social studies, science, etc., and comprehending and enjoying it better than I did at age eight. They are reading books to themselves, doing math lessons and understanding the concepts, and enjoying learning in the process. If that isn't an achievement for children in their age group in this day and age, then I don't

know what is.

I am very appreciative of your concern for the families whose children might be neglected or abused, but I've also seen that happen with my friends in the school system. And if that is the case, then may I ask why it is necessary to take away the freedom of the homeschoolers who are doing very well with their children?

I have many friends who homeschool, and they are the best friends I could ever ask for. They are loving, encouraging, and fun to be with. I always wanted friends like that when I was in school. But the friends I have had who go to school are often sarcastic, unloving, unsympathetic, and very disrespectful to their parents and teachers. I was amazed to hear some of my school friends mutter under their breath that their parents were "dumb and stupid" because they would not let them go to a friend's house. I am not saying that homeschoolers are better than other kids, but just that they are learning some things that many other kids are not learning, and I see a very visible difference.

I have a hard time understanding how one teacher in a classroom of twenty kids can find time to teach all of them to be kind and respectful, much less teach them math, science, English and history. I have experience. I went to school, and the teacher was very busy all the time trying to keep the children from fighting. At home I learn in a quiet, neat, friendly, loving environment. I don't see how things could be better.

Many famous scientists and politicians of the past learned at home. Many of the things we study were discovered by the very earliest homeschoolers who were curious about their world and had time to really study it. Even those who went to school still had more time with their parents than kids do today. Their parents helped them learn to work hard and to be great leaders at home and in the world.

And so, as a child of Montana, I plead with you to please consider what I have said. This bill, now and later, will make many lives extremely difficult. If you were in our shoes, you would do all in your power to stop such a bill. We did not just start home schooling because we wanted to cause trouble, but because we really believed it was the best thing for our family. And we were right. It really has been the best thing!

Thank you for reading and considering all that I have said.

Sincerely,

Emily Beth Bond

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