SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 58
DATE 2-14-05
BILL NO. SB-291

Dear Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our feelings Against SB291. If SB291 passes, our freedom to educate our children at home will be greatly diminished. We understand the public school system requires some measurement of standardized testing to evaluate students who have been entrusted to the public school system by their parents. Those parents have made the choice to have their children publicly educated. We have not chosen public education for our children, therefore feel strongly that required monitoring of parent teaching practices and standardized testing of our children is not necessary and will only stifle creativity and flexibility in our home education. Recently, nationally syndicated television has focused its attention on some extreme cases of child abuse and neglect, trying to link those cases directly to home schooling. This kind of exposure serves negatively to home schooling as a whole. We believe the current home schooling laws, along with current truancy and child neglect laws are enough to protect abused and neglected children.

We are a Christian family who puts its faith in God. We believe our children are gifts to raise and nurture while they are in our care. 6 years ago we made the decision to educate them at home. They were previously enrolled in public education and transitioned to home schooling very well. They are academically strong and just as importantly our family unit is solid, which we believe is a direct result of our decision to home educate.
We did not leave the public education system for negative reasons. Our decision to home educate was the best decision for our children and our family. They have the freedom to experience learning in ways that cross age segregated boundaries, they study at their own pace and they don't have to conform to standards that label them before they reach their full potential. Many of us adults are still working on reaching our full potential. That is the beauty of education; it never ends.

We feel strongly about equipping our children to be functional members of society with character integrity and quality moral values. In home education there is much time to work on character adjustment. The most rewarding and beneficial times during our last 6 years of educating our children have been discussing the real issues of life. These times would not have been as easily available for us had they been enrolled in public school.

We take the responsibility of educating our children very seriously. We fully understand our responsibility to ensure they are receiving a quality education and we strive to meet their individual learning needs. We have made the choice to home educate our children and should have that choice without unnecessary regulations.

Please protect our right to home educate our children by voting Against SB 291.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Valerie J. Jones

Dale and Valerie Jones
Billings, MT
Jenna Jones 17, Grant Jones 14 and Olivia Jones 11