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SB291

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Today, I come to testify against this bill. I also come to testify for two people. My children's father and myself.

Neither of us have teacher's certificates, yet we have successfully homeschooled for more than 13 years. The 1st of the 5 children graduated from public school, now 28, is an appliance salesman in West Palm Beach Florida. Our 2nd child, now 27, left school at age 14 and came home. She received her Associates Degree at age 18, and continued to the University of Washington to earn a degree in Political Science. She is now working as the manager of a laboratory at Swedish Hospital in Seattle, while working on her masters. Our 3rd child, now 13, has never attended school, he is a bright child and interested in politics and current events. Our 4th child, now 10, attended public school during Kindergarden and part of the first grade. Where torment from peers along with other factors, led to her request to come home. She is now doing everything that the public school claimed she could not do. Our 5th child, now 5, attends Kindergarden at the local public school.

"I have 5 children" as Bill Cosby once said "because I do not want six." I wanted each and every one of my children. I am a person with a foot in two educational doors.

When thinking about my testimony here today, I knew that many people would be testifying regarding this bill, fiscal, regulatory and possibilities. So not wanting to be redundant, I chose to speak to the issue before this committee in a different manner.

My family's first record of being American is recorded in 1691, with the first Crosthwaite that emigrated. They once again show up in the American spotlight on July 9, 1755 when Major General Edward Braddock, fought the French and Indians shortly after crossing the Monongahela River. General Braddock suffered a mortal shot through a lung. Thomas Morse, one of my great-grandfathers, assisted a young George Washington in carrying General Braddock from the field of battle.

There are references to Crosthwaites throughout Virginia's history. Another one signed the Albemarle Declaration of Independence. One firebrand, related to the Crosthwaite's, stood in March of 1775 and gave a speech that electrified his audience. He said, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me: give me liberty or give me death." Later he opposed the Constitution and work tirelessly for a document that we call the Bill of Rights.

They fought in the war of 1812. Later, one died for the Confederacy. One, my great, great grandfather a union soldier, survived the war. One relative, a student of the human condition, wrote many books and stories, his best known book "Huckleberry Finn" is still a favorite to this day. My grandfather fought in France in the Great War, the one to end all wars in 1918. My Uncle turned up on the D-Day cover of Life Magazine storming the beaches at Normandy on June 6, 1944. And in August of 1950, my father stepped off a troop ship onto the shores of South Korea.

We are an American family. From the time of my birth at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, I was told the tales of our Heritage and the importance of defense of this nation. I was also taught that we Americans have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With those teachings I joined the Army in 1974 and worked as an Intelligence analyst.

I comment on this not because of my family history, but because each American has his or her own story related to the desire to be a free American. We have supported and argued with our government since the beginning and, most likely will do so in the future. It means freedom to do what we feel best for our children

This bill, introduced to the Education committee of this legislature could become the most intrusive homeschool regulation in the nation. It intrudes into our lives and being. It forces me to pay for things I willingly and gladly pay for through taxes to support my local schools. All this from a state that allowed women to vote in elections prior to their right to vote was given to them legally by the federal government. This, from a state that sent the first woman to Congress.

It places government control at my children's kitchen table.

Its fiscal note says that a number of teachers will have to be hired to oversee us. I cannot see that. I see where teachers leave their districts, many with years of experience, to set up businesses to cater to homeschoolers. In a state that is having problems retaining qualified teachers. This is a lucrative opportunity for an experienced teacher to make money, and not have to be in the classroom. I see homeschoolers certified to teach opening businesses to allow others to continue to homeschool.

I have spent thousands of dollars, over the years, on materials to educate my children, yet under this I must use curriculum that I find inferior compared to what I have in my own home.

My school district does not even have the funds to pick up kindergardeners. Yet the unfunded mandates of this bill would be imposed upon them. What will these districts have to take away from their educational programs for the majority of the children in this state to comply?

The second person I testify for is the children's father. He requested that I gently remind the legislature that it is a proven fact that parental involvement in a child's life is the most important factor in a child's education. Homeschooling allows him to be involved more than most

parents. Whether he is working days, evenings or midnight shift he sees his children an average of 8-10 hours a day. We rotate our schedules to allow this.

When we left him, last Tuesday, to board the plane that will ultimately take him to Iraq, his last words through his tears were, if this bill passes, close up the house and move the kids to West Virginia. You'll be with your family and the kids can continue their studies in peace, we'll work out what to do when my tour is over.

This from a man whose ancestors moved to this state over 100 years ago. His family home is here and ranching operation still thrives. Yet, he is willing to give up his heritage for his kid's sake.

My ancestors, would roll over in their graves.

Thank you.