SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 8
DATE 2-19-07
BILL NO. SB 458

Honorable Senator;

In review of the proposed bill, SB458, I have found it to be less than beneficial to the state of Montana. I know from study and history that any new legislation needs to pass two tests before ever being considered. It must be planned to benefit someone or something, or it must be designed to protect the intended. This bill fails both of these tests. The intended recipient of this benefit or protection must be outside of the legislating body. In other words, quality legislation must have benefit or protection for a unit outside of government itself. This bill provides nothing positive for anyone outside of state agencies, local school boards, but especially, not for the children themselves.

To say that there was a benefit for the children of Montana in this bill would be incorrect. That would be to say that the education provided by the parents and families of the current home educators is inferior and not of equal caliber to that provided in public schools. We can provide insurmountable evidence that proves quite the contrary. This would also be to ascertain that the qualifications of the parents themselves are sub-standard to that of the public educators available in our local districts. I would enjoy the chance to introduce you to the example of a new doctor here. He is a new local MD in Dillon, MT. He also home educates. I do not believe that any Senator could tell him they believe the teachers here are better educated than he is. It would be foolish to attempt to convince him that the folks in the schools are more qualified to educate his children than he is. We are a diverse group of families. It is our goal to provide the best education possible for our children. Our qualifications are just as diverse as we are. We are professionals, government employees, doctors, lawyers, business owners and even educators.

As to the test of protection, I would ask who is to be protected and from what? If it is the belief of the writer or writers of this bill that the public school children need protection that is provided, I have to ask from what, and how does this protect them? To say that the intended recipients of protection are the home schooled children would be to say that we, the parents, are damaging them. I take great issue with that position as there is no evidence to that idea. On the contrary, our children are being protected. That is the driving force behind our intent to provide our children's education in this manner.

This bill has failed the most basic tests of legislation. Any new law or restriction that only expands the bounds of government is wrong. I strongly object to this and thank you for your time.

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