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>From the HSLDA E-lert Service...
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New Jersey--Prepare To Oppose Restrictive Homeschool Bill

Dear HSLDA Members and Friends,

On September 22, New Jersey Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver and Assemblyman Harvey Smith filed a bill that would cause a catastrophic destruction of homeschool freedom in New Jersey.

For decades, homeschooling in New Jersey has thrived, producing astonishingly good results at no taxpayer expense even while public schools serve up one expensive disappointment after another. There is no justification to cripple the most successful form of education in New Jersey with increased regulation. Studies show that children do no better in states with heavy regulatory burdens.

The organizations of the homeschool task force are united in opposing this bill, A. 3123, and are developing a unified response. No benefit, great or small, can possibly compensate for the loss of freedom. The task force opposes this bill in every detail. There is no compromise position. The bill must be defeated.

ACTION REQUESTED

The time for action will be very soon, but not yet. Please wait, but be prepared to take action when HSLDA recommends it.

BACKGROUND

These organizations form the homeschool task force: HSLDA, Catholic Homeschoolers of New Jersey (Kevin Kiernan), Eagle Forum of New Jersey (Carolee Adams), Education Network Of Christian Homeschoolers of New Jersey (Mark August), New Jersey Homeschool Association (Nan McVicker), and Unschoolers Network (Nancy Plent). These same organizations unified to help stop the infamous A.B. 4033 in 2004.

A 3123 would do the following:

1. Require an annual notarized letter of intent to register every homeschooled child.
2. Require parents to list objectives in every mandatory subject.
3. Require evidence of immunization.
4. Require proof that the children have received all medical services the law requires.
5. Require a certification that adults in the home have not committed certain crimes.
6. Require 180 days of instruction.
7. Empower the Commissioner of Education to decide what subjects are mandatory.
8. Empower the Commissioner of Education to determine course content "guidelines" starting in kindergarten.
9. Require that parents keep the following records and submit them annually to the school district, and also as often as the

superintendent requests, if he has "reason to believe" the student is not getting "an appropriate education":

> list of reading materials

> writing samples

> worksheets

> workbooks

> creative materials

> standardized testing in grades 3, 5 and 8 (with parents being prohibited from administering the test)

> an annual evaluation by a person other than the parent, after an interview and review of materials. The evaluator must certify the student is receiving an "appropriate education." The evaluator must be a: (a) licensed psychologist, or (b) certified school psychologist, or (c) New Jersey public or private school teacher, or (d) New Jersey public or private school administrator.

10. Empower the superintendent to ask the school board to terminate homeschooling if he believes the records (above) show the homeschool program is "unsatisfactory in providing an adequate education."

11. "Adequate education" is not defined, so the superintendent and school board have wide latitude to decide what they think it means.

A. 3123 would turn New Jersey into one of the worst homeschool states in the country. The bill is very similar to Pennsylvania's homeschool law, which is generally recognized as the second worst in the nation, surpassed only by New York's. A. 3123, however, includes features that make it even worse than Pennsylvania's.

Some families have stayed in New Jersey and endured high tax burdens because the homeschool law is favorable. If A. 3123 passes, some families will leave the state, reducing the tax base without any corresponding savings from reduced state or local education expense. At the same time, the mountain of paperwork it will create for superintendents will raise expenses that will ultimately be footed by the already put-upon taxpayer.

Sincerely Yours,

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