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>From the HSLDA E-lert Service...
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New Jersey--Calls Needed Immediately
to Block Restrictive Homeschool Bill

Dear HSLDA Members and Friends,

Now is the time to speak with one voice and tell New Jersey lawmakers that the homeschool restriction bill, A. 3123, must be stopped.

This bill would rob you of your freedom, tangle you in red tape, and let bureaucrats force you to stop homeschooling. Bureaucrats could mandate subjects and control course content. The bill demands that you keep mountains of records and interferes with your medical privacy.

New Jersey residents have already paid enough for expensive public school disappointments. A. 3123 will increase taxes yet again for New Jersey families because more bureaucrats will need to be hired and paid to enforce it. Also, millions of dollars in added taxes will be necessary, if even only a small percentage of homeschoolers put their children in public school rather than endure the crushing new weight of paperwork and the threats of school superintendents. And state revenues will be lost if homeschool families avoid living in New Jersey.

ACTION REQUESTED

1. If either bill sponsor, Sheila Oliver (District 34, East Orange, Clifton, Glen Ridge, Montclair, West Patterson) or Harvey Smith (District 31, Bayonne City, Jersey City) is your assembly person, call them and courteously ask them to withdraw this bill. Your message can be as simple as, "Please withdraw A. 3123. We don't need our taxes raised to pay for something as pointless as regulation that helps no one. Studies show that children in states with high homeschool regulation do no better than those in states with low homeschool regulation."

2. Call all the members of the assembly Education Committee (listed below) and courteously convey your message. It can be as simple as, "Please stop A. 3123, the homeschool restriction bill. I don't want my taxes raised to pay for something as pointless as regulation that helps no one. Studies show that heavier homeschool regulation does not help children. The law already requires that homeschooled children get instruction equivalent to public school instruction. That is enough." Keep calling until you get through.

3. While telephone calls and personal visits have the most impact, e-mails, faxes and letters can also have an effect.

4. Contact other homeschool families and ask them to help.

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BACKGROUND

Here is a summary of what A. 3123 would do:

1. Give the superintendent and school board power to force a family to stop homeschooling if they believe the child is not getting an

"appropriate education." This means whatever the superintendent and school board say it means because it is not defined. A bureaucrat would have power make a life or death decision over your homeschool program.

2. Give the Commissioner of Education power to mandate courses and course content ("objectives"). Families would no longer be free to decide what to teach.

3. Require parents to list objectives in every mandatory subject. Any family whose list does not satisfy the superintendent will be in trouble.

4. Require parents to send a notarized letter and register every homeschooled child annually.

5. Require parents to prove that the children have received all medical services and immunizations the law requires.

6. Require parents to certify that adults in the home have not committed certain crimes.

7. Require that parents provide 180 days of instruction and turn in these records annually (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.

The organizations of the New Jersey homeschool task force are united in opposing this bill: 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).

Thank you for standing with us for freedom.

Sincerely yours,

Scott Woodruff
HSLDA Staff Attorney

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