

OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED HOMESCHOOL LEGISLATION – A1918

Testimony given on January 21, 2004

(Edited version to replace original testimony given on date above – 1/23/04)

State Board of Education members,

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak to you about the recently introduced legislation to regulate homeschoolers. Since there is no other public testimony meeting until May, I thought it good to inform you of recent events, and provide information that would apprise you of this serious situation.

My name is Ray Stoeber, President of Education Network Of Christian Homeschoolers of New Jersey, an organization begun in 1989. I have been asked to represent seven organizations having vested interest in this issue. These organizations represent the full spectrum of homeschoolers in New Jersey; families numbering in the thousands.

I am here to present testimony concerning A1918 (formerly A4033), a bill recently re-introduced by Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg, which would enforce certain requirements on homeschoolers and place them under the regulation of the State Board of Education. The original bill was originally introduced during the end of the last legislative cycle.

Homeschooling parents became deeply concerned that this bill might be navigated around the normal committees and public hearing process. Hundreds of parents called Assemblywoman Weinberg's office (and other legislators) asking that the bill not be introduced or to withdraw the bill from consideration. She ignored hundreds of phone, email and fax appeals by subsequently introducing bill A1918 (formerly A4033) on Thursday, January 8, 2004.

About 250 homeschool moms, dads, and students came to Trenton on Monday, January 12, to provide their legislators with information about the bill, as well as homeschooling, and to show that they overwhelmingly oppose any new legislation of this kind.

Homeschool leaders from around the state met for a press conference the same day to outline and illustrate negative aspects of this bill. Presentations addressed a short history of homeschooling in New Jersey, the testing requirement, financial objections, DYFS, & etc., (copies are in your packet).

The full ramifications of this bill's enactment, its cost to the public school system and taxpayers have not been fathomed.

There are a number of objections that I can make to the enactment of this bill:

- You don't fix what isn't broken
- It will add to the already financially overburdened public school system.
- It will add to the tax burden of New Jersey property tax payers.
- It will add to the cost families have to bear to meet this bill's requirements.
- Homeschooling does well in the most unregulated environments and increased regulation does not enhance the sociological or educational results (see NHERI studies in packet).
- DYFS' responsibility and fixes should be the center of attention

- Thousands of homeschooling families will be forced to pay the price for the failure of DYFS and one family's alleged child abuse.
- This bill is tantamount to profiling all homeschoolers as child abusers and a distraction from the real problems at best.
- Homeschooling families have been proven successful in raising their children to be hard working contributors to our society.
- Studies demonstrate that homeschool students have achieved excellence in scholastic ability and leadership qualities.
- Homeschool families are law-abiding, positive contributors to society, and are actively engaged in their communities.
- Homeschool regulations would be placed on the authority of the State Board of Education akin to the unwieldy and criticized Abbott District management.

I could also speak of my own family. two of my children attend a private university and are A and B students. My second son desires to enter the military and then law enforcement. Today he is working two part time jobs locally while completing his senior year. My Second daughter has her own business in our community. They are both members of Sea Scouts. I could provide hundreds of success stories from thousands of homeschool families; who love their children and country; who have sacrificed themselves to train and prepare their children for life.

A case for defending homeschooling, its positive impact on families and our society as a whole could be made easily, but I would rather bring a pointed focus to *the more important aspect* of our concerns.

This legislation is a plain and simple encroachment on Freedom. Freedom is one of the most important concepts of American self-government: the national fabric woven with Freedom, Liberty and Justice.

Historically, parents have been recognized as the most capable providers for the physical, mental, educational, and spiritual needs of their children. They have shown to do the best for their children. They have had the Freedom to raise their children without government intervention in America for centuries.

Parents are zealous for their Freedoms and they must exercise that God-given freedom to be the best parents they can be, and to produce the best student-citizens possible, enhancing the lives of all Americans.

Homeschooling need not be further regulated. It is already provided for and defined adequately under current law and case precedent. Needless laws must not encroach upon Freedom any further. I appeal to this Board to assist in the defeat of this legislation.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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