

March 9, 2021

Minnesota House Education Policy Committee

Re: Omnibus Bill and homeschooling requirement changes

House Education Policy Committee:

I am writing to oppose changes to homeschool requirements in the 2021 Omnibus Bill.

Minnesota's current homeschooling laws were established after much work done by the homeschool community, the Legislature, and school district personnel. They took time to carefully look at the issue and form reasonable procedures that both local districts and homeschooling families supported. The procedures are working well. Why change them? Furthermore, school districts are especially stressed with all the changes have been required by the COVID pandemic. They do not need more to do. Let districts focus on getting their students back up to speed after the well-documented setbacks of the past year. They need to work with helping their students achieve. Homeschool parents need to focus on helping their children achieve. Again, please don't try to fix what isn't broken.

As a homeschool parent, I appreciate seeing my children's standardized test scores each year and using them to inform my goal setting and curriculum planning for them. However, I also use many other forms of assessment to form a full picture of my children's abilities, achievements, and needs. Standardized, multiple choice tests give only a very limited view of each child. The younger the child, the more this is true. I know this as a parent and as a former teacher and former instructor in the College of Education at Northwestern University. Many homeschool families have left the public schools out of frustration with so much time being spent teaching to the test rather than seeking to truly educate the whole child. Homeschool parents spend the entire school day with their children. We know their strengths and weaknesses already. Standardized tests are a tool in a parent's toolbox. They are not on their own a valid evaluation of a child's abilities.

Parents care and know their children better than anyone. They are more committed than anyone to their children's growth and success in life. Research on homeschoolers repeatedly show them outperforming their public-school counterparts. In fact, 78% of peer-reviewed studies comparing academic achievement between homeschoolers and public-schoolers showed homeschoolers performing significantly better (Ray, 2017). The different homeschooling requirements of each state had no effect on their homeschoolers' achievement scores. The proposed changes will be a useless burden to both homeschool families and school districts.

Homeschooling families today are a diverse population. As of 2019, 41% of homeschool families are non-white families. The limitations and problems of using standardized tests with minority populations is especially well-documented. Please keep testing as a parent's tool, not as an unfair evaluation.

In closing, it is estimated that homeschoolers save taxpayers \$27 billion nationwide. They do this while successfully educating their children. Let's continue letting the public schools focus on their work and the homeschoolers continuing theirs. The proposed changes will simply burden both the school districts

and homeschool families. Please reject the proposed changes and leave everyone free to do their critical work of educating children.

Thank you for listening.

Michelle Hanson

702 Main St. E.

Mapleton, MN 56065

507-524-4080

michellemhanson@gmail.com