

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to you in opposition of H8531. I am finishing up my 6th year homeschooling, and it has been the single best parenting choice I have ever made. My daughter attended public school through third grade, and while she had wonderful teachers, the environment was not providing her the learning opportunities she craved. She is now finishing 9th grade and thriving. I am able to curate her education to her goals which currently include attending college for English and dance and possibly pursuing a Masters in Library Science. Homeschooling has allowed her to choose a foreign language not offered in our local public school and take advanced English classes that would have been considered above her grade level. It has allowed her the time to attend all of her extracurricular activities, including a pre-professional ballet program, advanced sewing classes, and volunteering at our local library.

I think it is important to emphasize that my opposition is not out of concern for myself. I believe my education and work experience would allow me to pass the "qualifications" being proposed. However, it is not my education or experience that allow me to succeed in teaching my child. It is my dedication to providing the best possible educational experience, and that is all any homeschool parent wants. They don't just want to see their children succeed, they want to see them thrive, they want to see them find a love for learning, and they want to be an active part of their children's lives.

My opposition is in fear of the irreparable harm this bill will cause by taking educational decisions away from parents. It is in fear of how this will affect the children who don't feel safe in their school. Forcing them to return to an environment that is both physically and psychologically harmful, while administrators, who know nothing about them, make decision about their future. It is fear for the parents who want to provide the best opportunities for their children but are deemed "not qualified" to make the choices to do so.

I have to believe this bill is being proposed due to a lack of understanding of what homeschooling actually is, and not a malicious attempt at control. There is already policy established to address truancy, and child protection laws already apply to all families, including homeschooling families. I work in an environment where I see first hand the results of children who have experienced abuse. I do not take it lightly, yet, I do not see how this bill protects anyone. I see how children attending public school, exposed to mandated reporters every day, are not being protected. I see children who are experiencing psychological traumas we as adults would struggle with. As a society, we need to find better ways to protect children in abusive situations, both at home and

in their educational environment. Taking educational decisions away from parents is not the way to do it.

Sincerely,

Meaghan Bentley