

6715 Conway Ave
Takoma Park, MD 20912

March 1, 2022

I am writing to register my opposition to H.B. 832 which seeks to create a Homeschool Advisory Council.

I think Delegate Ruth was well-meaning when she introduced it, but the bill is unnecessary and may have long term negative effects on Maryland homeschoolers.

I am a 23 year resident of Takoma Park and have been homeschooling since 2006. My son was homeschooled from K to 12, and is currently a successful junior at UMBC. My daughter is currently a fourth grade homeschooler.

Homeschooling has thrived for decades in Maryland without an official Homeschool Advisory Council, and New Hampshire is the only U.S. state with a homeschool advisory council created by statute.

I would support a bill written to require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to hold regular, open meetings with the homeschool community, instead of forming a council by statute, but that is not what H.B. 832 does.

H.B. 832 makes it far too easy for MSDE to choose to ignore the voices of all homeschoolers except those on the council.

The council would not have accountability to the homeschool community; it is an entity answerable to itself. It is an appointed council, not a representative one, starting with appointed members and government employees who have voting rights. These initial members then choose all remaining council members, and the council chooses its successors, making it a self-perpetuating body.

H.B. 832 would minimize the voices of grassroots homeschool advocates and organizations.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Mary Suzanne Stimler