



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB832
Education - Maryland Homeschool Advisory Council - Establishment

Delegate Sheila Ruth

March 3, 2022

House Bill 832 creates a homeschool advisory council in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE has other advisory councils, such as the Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Maryland State Advisory Council on Gifted and Talented Education.

The purpose of the Homeschool Advisory Council is to act as a liaison between MSDE and the homeschool community, and to advise the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education on matters related to homeschooling.

Homeschooling in Maryland is regulated by MSDE in COMAR, and Maryland's homeschool regulations provide a good balance of enough regulation to ensure that children are learning, without being overburdensome or intrusive for homeschool families. Homeschooling families are incredibly diverse in homeschooling goals, philosophy, reasons for homeschooling, and methods, but all of them value the flexibility and independence of homeschooling.

I loved my time homeschooling my son. I loved that it gave me the flexibility to customize the program to his needs and his ways of learning, whether it was reading books, doing science experiments, or hiking in Patapsco State Park. My son is now 26 years old, newly married, and he and his wife are both finishing up PhD's in Physics. I treasured the times we spent together homeschooling, and we remain close even though he and his wife live in another state.

Homeschoolers generally oppose any additional regulation, but this bill does not impose any regulation or oversight. The council created in this bill would simply be a conduit for communication.

I know that this committee is aware of the intense public interest this bill has generated. I have been meeting with members of the homeschool community, including parents and homeschool groups, and stakeholders such as the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). I've been actively listening to concerns, and have developed a series of amendments that I believe address many of these concerns. The amendments are not yet in your bill folder, but I will be submitting them to the committee.

I thank the committee not only for your time today, but for the considerable time and work that this bill has placed on you and your staff. I ask for a favorable report for HB832.