

To the Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing to oppose Del. Sheila Ruth's HB832. I am a homeschooling mom of three in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> grades. I believe this proposed homeschool advisory committee is both unnecessary and unwanted by many in the homeschooling community. Here are some of my main reasons:

1. Homeschoolers are independent by definition. We do not want to be a part of public education, and we do not want to be represented by a committee to the MSDE. We definitely do not want more layers of bureaucracy. We appreciate the relatively hands-off laws for homeschooling in MD and we want to keep it that way. More attention brings unwelcome attention.
2. There is no way this committee will be independent and representative of all homeschoolers, nor does it need to be. We are perfectly capable of advocating for ourselves directly with our officials. The stated goals of this committee have been unclear and nothing I've heard warrants a need for this committee. The goal of hearing feedback from the community could be met in the form of surveys, town halls, etc without the need for a permanent committee.
3. This bill was written in isolation by a few who claim to represent the desires of homeschoolers (they don't), and rushed to committee despite overwhelming calls for its withdrawal.
4. There are too many unanswered questions: Who wants this bill to pass? Does MSDE want increased homeschool input? I don't think so. Why is a small select group of homeschoolers—FORMER homeschoolers at that!—so interested in getting this committee installed? Who will have undue influence over it? Will teacher's unions get a say? How much transparency will it have? Not only will homeschoolers have to keep up with what our lawmakers and MSDE officials are doing, but we will also have to work hard to keep tabs on this committee and whether they are really representing us. This is unfair and burdensome.

I urge you to give this bill an unfavorable report. This is unwelcome to most homeschoolers. I venture to guess that you will get an overwhelmingly unfavorable response to this bill. If so, you must vote unfavorable or there will be many questions as to what is going on behind the scenes and who is really behind the push for this bill.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Renee Huff