

WENDY BUSH
Director@TEA-Education.com

Thursday, March 3, 2022

HB0832 HEARING: OPPOSE

Ways & Means Committee
Honorable Chair Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Vice Chair Delegate Alonzo T. Washington
Members of the Committee

I submit this testimony on HB0832 requesting that you vote -- OPPOSE.

The idea of creating a State Homeschool Advisory Council within the MD Department of Education is a totally novel concept that the MD homeschool community was **NOT** informed of prior to its **unexpected introduction** to this committee one month ago by Delegate Ruth, a former homeschool parent who is a friend of mine and whose son graduated from the oversight program that I direct.

The draft for this bill was brought to Del Ruth by a former homeschool parent who did **NOT** first present the idea to the MD homeschool community for robust research and discussion of this concept -- one that is untested, and exists only in one other state where it was enacted for one highly specific purpose not applicable to MD.

When the bill was made public, your offices were the unfortunate recipients of the massive outcry of grassroots homeschoolers **OPPOSING** the idea that was brought to Del Ruth. I apologize that you felt the brunt of that opposition, but now you know how strongly against this bill the vast majority of homeschoolers are and how passionately they feel about it.

This bill has forced us into this 'clock-ticking' dilemma without all options being thoroughly discussed by the widest number of people possible. **Please OPPOSE this bill to allow the homeschool community an in-depth, unhurried conversation on this concept** -- and the greater question of how to improve advocacy with MSDE. If the idea is sound, it will withstand a period of vigorous discussion and can be reintroduced next session.

Del Ruth's intentions are genuine. We just need to respect the grassroots process to get this right.

Other Concerns Regarding HB0832:

- A Homeschool Advisory Council should NOT be part of MSDE.
- Homeschool advocacy should work with MSDE, but not be part of MSDE.
- State Department of Education Homeschool Advisory Councils are untested, have no track record, and aren't needed as evidenced by their non-existence in all other states (except NH where one was created for a specific, one-time purpose).
- HB832 creates a Homeschool Advisory Council that is NOT a grassroots advocacy group, but an appointed, self-perpetuating group with no accountability to the group it purports to speak for.

Sincerely,

Wendy Bush