

March 1, 2022

House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401
(sent via electronic submission)

Re: HB0832

Dear Committee Members,

I request your immediate withdrawal of House Bill No. 0832 entitled, "Education - Maryland Homeschool Advisory Council – Establishment". The bill is cause for grave concern for my homeschooling family and community. As a citizen of Maryland, resident of Prince George's county, and a homeschooling parent I strongly oppose this bill.

Our journey to homeschool began back in 2017. Our son had finished his time at Greenbelt Nursery School, and we were exploring his next steps in schooling. We meet several homeschoolers in our town of Cheverly. I was impressed with the diversity of the community – unschoolers, religious, secular, eclectic, traditional, and the entire spectrum of all types. I realized we could find a path that would fit the needs of our son and the values of our family, while meeting all the requirements of the law. We settled on the Oak Meadow curriculum and skew heavily towards a Montessori methodology. What stood out the most in the Maryland homeschool community was the dedication of the families for their children. These are not wealthy families, homeschooling is not a luxury. Many, including my family, make financial sacrifices to homeschool. We coupon clip, carpool, share curriculum books, use libraries, and rely on a homegrown network of families for activities. Much like my family, we chose to reduce our income to one in order to have one partner at home to educate our children. Our reasons, our methods vary, how we homeschool varies, but in the end we all have a common theme. We all want the best education for our children. Our children are thriving. Our play groups, co ops, tutorials, and classes are a study in the success of homeschool in the state of Maryland. Children of all ages and abilities are exploring group dynamics, learning, and connecting.

There is no need for a Maryland Homeschool Advisory Council. Our son's education needs are met by a matrixed network of public resources such as libraries and county classes and private sessions such as cooperative playgroups and private classes. My educational instruction is assessed twice a year by Prince George's County Public School (PGCPS). His education has a safety net. He has regular access to mandatory reporters (doctors, librarians, camp counselors, parks and recreation coaches). My son has a deep rich (and fun!) life as a homeschooler in Prince George's County. He is a proud Marylander, he is growing up exploring Maryland as his classroom.

There is no need for this committee. This committee has the potential to remove my direct access to you as my elected representative. You could very easily brush off my

homeschool concerns and refer me to the committee established in this bill. You would stop listening to me – and that is why I am opposing it. I am fighting so my voice is always heard. I am fighting so my son's needs are met. He is thriving as a homeschooler. Please ensure he continues to thrive. The homeschool community in Prince George's County, and the vast majority of Maryland, opposes this bill. Do not listen to the loud voices of a few. Listen the steady tones of us long term homeschooling families. Those of us who are steady and strong repeating ourselves with the consistent "we do not need this, our children do not need this."

The children in traditional public schools deserve your resources and attention. They deserve a quality public funded education. It is crushing to hear our neighbor's children do not have quality art classes, a 20 minutes recess once a day, or when I see the school buses arriving after 6:30PM each night. Three solid issues you as a legislative body could truly improve for children in Prince George's county public schools: art education, outdoor play time, and bus services to/from school. Homeschool children do not need a committee, the children in Prince George's county public schools deserve your attention.

I request your immediate withdrawal of this bill. Allow all voices of homeschoolers in the state of Maryland to be heard through the current equitable access that exists in the State of Maryland's legislative process. Allow any homeschool advocacy to take place through non legislative channels with equitable representation of our diverse community, not through the board outlined in HB0832 an appointed board representing a singular political voice. Do not leave our children behind in pursuit of political power.

Thank you,

Kathleen Reidy, Mother to William McLaughlin (age 7)
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