

Homeschooling has allowed our family the freedom to educate my son to his best learning style and because of this he is thriving. My son was falling through the cracks in Public school and it wasn't until a couple years into our homeschooling experience that I realized how much he was. There were learning disabilities that were never picked up on, teachers always writing on his progress reports he needed to put more effort. My son who is highly intelligent was not thriving at all in the school system. We are now 6 years in and he is now thriving in math (math disability we found out) after having a math teacher in First grade tell us in a conference that she had no clue where our son was at math. I have watched my son go through 2 years and 2 months of the government run education system and I have seen how negatively it affected him.

It's because of this I do not see any benefit to a homeschool advisory board that will be a part of the Maryland educational system. My husband and I have said that if our son were still in public schools he would be failing, in summer school, and having many issues. We would still be battling him to do his school work and not be "lazy". My son is intelligent and because of this the teachers never once thought to look deeper into his school work and see that there were warning signs of an issue. I kept his notebooks from his school desk from Second grade after I pulled him. I showed those notebooks to his Occupational therapist a few weeks after he started working with her. One glance while flipping through the pages and she was appalled. She told me this is not okay, there are indicators here that there was an issue and no one did anything about it.

How is a 16 person advisory board going to benefit my child? How will it be decided who represents a gifted child? What are the parameters? Is it going to be like in the school system where the children have to be proficient in doing busy work, and rattling off mundane facts to qualify as gifted? All our children have gifts. My son excels in the fine arts, music (plays the electric guitar in a rock band, vocals), writing (poetry, short stories), sketching, creating stop motion movies. He reads nonfiction books on any topic that interest him that week from the Antartica to nuclear science. He loves history and going to museums. His homeschool friend does not excel in these areas but excels in math and science. So which one is gifted?

I know this bill has nothing but good intentions but I have to politely disagree that this advisory board will be beneficial to

our wonderfully diverse homeschool community. The homeschool community has always been a cohesive unit with everyone sharing ideas and support without really any judging of how each person chooses to do it. There are groups, co-hops, umbrellas, classes that we have a choice to be a part of that meet our learning needs and to meet those who homeschool in a similar way. We recently joined a learning center where everyone is so diverse in their beliefs, education etc. Yet we all get along, are respectful and allow each person, "to do you" without judgement. Since this bill has been proposed I have seen a rift starting in the homeschool community. People arguing, not being kind etc. If just a proposal of this bill has done this, it concerns many of us that the passing of this bill will continue to create a rift in our community. We feel the advisory board will just cause a bigger rift instead of bringing us together. There are just too many ways to homeschool to have the community represented equally with just 16 people on a board. Maryland homeschoolers have been educating their children without issue for years and as the old adage goes, " If it ain't broke don't fix it."

One thing I can say for certain is that when the community needs to band together to ensure we continue to have our rights to homeschool we do it. We do not need an advisory board to do this. I do not need 16 people to be my voice.

I ask you once again to please consider the voices of the homeschool community who are asking for this bill to be dropped.

Thank you,
Nicole Miller