

Ways and Means Committee

Re: HB0832

March 1, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to testify in opposition to HB0832.

As a homeschooling parent with over 10 years' experience, I have always successfully advocated for myself with MSDE. I have lived in both Baltimore County and Howard County, and I have experienced an excellent working relationship between homeschooling parents and the county homeschooling offices.

My three main reasons for opposing HB0832 are **lack of elective process, lack of accountability to the Homeschooling community, and diminishment of each diverse Homeschooling Family's voice.**

Under HB0832, the Advisory Council would not be a freestanding, autonomous council. The Council members would be chosen by MSDE; the Homeschooling Citizens would have no opportunity to elect or select the committee members who would supposedly be representing the Homeschooling Community. Unlike elected representatives, the Advisory Council would not be accountable to the group of citizens for which they would be speaking.

Homeschooling families would not have any access to this Advisory Council to make requests, express concerns, or address issues, yet the Advisory Council would be the official recognized government voice of these families. The Advisory Council would diminish or, worse, take away my voice and the voice of all the diverse homeschoolers to self-advocate with MSDE.

Many superior options for cooperative dialogue between the Homeschooling Community and MSDE should be considered before rushing a bill into law. I would favor a bill to require MSDE to host town hall meetings with the Homeschool Community. I would consider an Advisory Council that is elected by registered Homeschooling citizens. I favor allowing the Homeschooling Community to come together and advocate for themselves at the grassroots level. **But I oppose HB0832 that diminishes each diverse Homeschooling Family's voice.**

Please vote against HB0832.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wienke, Registered Homeschool Parent of Howard County
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Columbia, MD 21045