

This information was prepared by Ohio Home Education Coalition, an open and inclusive coalition of interested homeschoolers who come together to raise awareness of issues facing homeschoolers in Ohio. This is not an interactive email address. As we are all busy with our families, individual responses would be impossible. However if someone wants to be added to this list, they can send an email to the OHEC address with: "Add my name" in the subject. Provide full name and an email address in the text. If you do not want to receive future emails from OHEC, please send an email to OHEC's email address with "Remove my name" in the subject. Thanks.

Below is the link to a report in the May 2 Akron Beacon Journal. OHEC believes that homeschoolers in the state should be aware of several things from the report:

1. In several subsequent days, the Akron Beacon Journal reported on the "Kenmore-area" family referenced in the below report. The mother and her partner are now charged with abusing their multiple children. If the charges are true, the abuse was substantial, tragic, and long-term. Children's Services Board was aware of concerns in this family for many, many years. These children were lost in the bureaucracy, and it is a tragedy when this happens. It is reported that these children were being schooled at home. Child abuse is not a homeschooling issue. It is a social services issue and there are extensive laws, both state and federal, to address child abuse.
2. State Senator John Carey and State Superintendent Susan Tave Zellman are reported below as having a public conversation in a committee hearing about concerns of homeschoolers and potential child abuse. We have checked with another State Senator's office and they confirmed the exchange. The Akron Beacon Journal reports the conversation to us. We are told that some homeschoolers are taking the Akron Beacon Journal to task for reporting the story. OHEC believes that the concerns in this exchange should rest with and be addressed to Senator Carey and Superintendent Zellman. To our knowledge, Senator Carey has never made any approach to a broad constituency of the homeschooling community to engage homeschoolers in any discussion on these or related issues. We do not believe Superintendent Zellman has either. Although the Beacon Journal report does not give all of the details about notification, assessment and various opportunities for the superintendent to provide due process if questions arise before issuing an excuse from compulsory attendance, nor does the report discuss the merits of families' rights, freedoms and responsibilities, nonetheless, they are technically correct in their very brief synopsis, except that notification and assessment are usually combined for one contact with the school district.

3. If we can be grateful for something from this report, it may very well be that the reporter did not lump together those who are homeschooling under the regulations in Ohio and those who are enrolling their children in publicly-funded and publicly accountable on-line or cyber charter schools. It will be even more important in the future months for the public to understand that enrollment in cyber-charter schools is distinctly different than compliance with the regulations governing homeschooling. We believe that greater scrutiny and accompanying greater demands are going to be made of the cyber charter schools (a report on charter schools which is ready to be released from the Legislative Office of Education Oversight says this: "Because on-line schooling in Ohio is relatively new, state and school policies and practices have to be developed.")

What we can do:

We can write well-thought letters to the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal (OHEC's letter will be forwarded to you in a subsequent email) at 44 East Exchange Street, Akron, OH 44328. We can also write to any other newspaper which reported on this family. We can point out: -- the many successes of homeschooling -- that additional law will seldom stop "bad" people from doing bad and often will prevent "good" people from doing good -- that even though some of the Kenmore-area children were older--as old as 14--apparently they only became "homeschoolers" within the last year. As mentioned above, the reports to the CSB had been on-going for many years, even while they presumably were enrolled in school. We can write to Senator John Carey (a letter sent by OHEC to Senator Carey will follow in a subsequent email.) at State Senator John Carey Senate Building Room #134, Ground Floor Columbus, OH 43215 We can write to our own state senator and state representatives to help them understand the long history of successful homeschooling in Ohio. It would be helpful for homeschoolers to share their own personal success stories with their legislators. (Find your legislator at <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/> or by calling your county Board of Elections.)

We can work to educate the public on the distinct differences between a family's right to comply with compulsory education statutes by homeschooling, as well as issues of fundamental freedoms of all citizens. This can be accomplished through additional letters to the editors, by personal contact with our legislators and by strengthening support groups where possible. We are certain that there are many other positive opportunities where homeschoolers can present a positive view of homeschooling to their communities. It is very important that we do that work now.

Here is the link to the article, "Legislator Sees Risk in Homeschooling" which was posted on Fri, May. 02, 2003 at:

www.ohio.com/mld/beaconjournal/news/local/5767674.htm