

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.

May 4, 2003

State Senator John Carey
Senate Building
Room #134, Ground Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator Carey,

It was a surprising and disturbing to read in the May 1 Akron Beacon Journal the report on your comments regarding homeschooling.

We will get right to the point – it would be a mistake and an abuse of legislative authority for the state to diminish the independence and freedom of families when there is no justification to warrant such measures.

As we are certain you well know, homeschooling families have been successful for more than the 13 years since the current Ohio regulations were written. It is hard work to homeschool. Many parents willingly accept that responsibility. Many families sacrifice greatly in order to provide an education for their children consistent with their principles and beliefs.

Beyond the historical success of homeschooling around the country, one must acknowledge the fundamental right of parents to make the choice to homeschool. If citizens are to maintain the rights to be free of state interference, certainly we can think of no greater indicator of support for the principles of freedom than the fundamental freedom of parents directing their children's education. This freedom principle must be additionally reinforced by the fact that homeschooling parents take no state funding and never have. (And to state the obvious, those now enrolling in publicly-funded charter schools are public school students and are not homeschooling. The state requires a notice as such by charter schools in ORC 3314-041.)

If the tragic case of the Summit County family that was first reported in the May 2 Akron Beacon Journal is true, it warrants the highest penalties imposed on parents who abuse their children. However, if abuse is proven, these children were well known already to children services investigators and they fell through the cracks. The complaints to CSB went on for years. The reported abuse these children suffered has nothing to do with the type of schooling they were receiving.

Additionally, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, in 2001, only 16.2% of substantiated cases of child abuse were first reported by educational personnel. Any abused child already enrolled in school has an 83.8% greater chance of being reported to children's service investigators by someone other school personnel.

We can only imagine that when a child who is enrolled in public school is abused, media reports would not even note their educational status—unless, of course, a trusted individual in the school community abuses that child. Abuse is a tragedy, period. But, no matter how many laws the state implements, sadly abuse continues. It has as much to do with school enrollment as with homeschooling, which is to say not at all.

We also see clearly why a few school superintendents and the state superintendent are beating this contrived drum against homeschooling—that is, the financial bleed to public education caused by charter schools. That must be coupled with the legislative faltering to fund public schools equitably, despite four Ohio Supreme Court decisions. Red ink might make anyone desperate—enough to attack a group of hard working, independent, innocent families, creating suspicion where none exists. Enrollment equals funding, even if it is one child at a time.

Yes, we agree with parents who make choices to educate their children in freedom at home. No, we do not agree with recent legislative trends which allow tax dollars, including our tax dollars, to be turned into the hands of those who wish to profit at the expense of public schools. We object to the fact that where local citizens had the opportunity to elect their school boards and attend school board hearings and actively participate in the decision-making of their local schools, that right is being eradicated by the privatization of public education, all at the taxpayer's expense. These trends are reminiscent of the famous quote regarding taxation without representation, only now the tyrant is not the throne but the seats of corporate power.

We acknowledge that not everyone can find their way to homeschooling, nor should everyone. But, we adamantly oppose the privatization of public school. We understand the public school desperation. We just do not agree with attacking homeschoolers as a means to make up for the gaping shortfalls in budgets.

Finally, we enclose an excerpt from an essay by Larry and Susan Kaseman entitled “Problems with Legislation to Prevent ‘Unqualified’ Families From Homeschooling, as published in July-August 2000 in Home Education Magazine. We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

We would appreciate hearing from you regarding our concerns. We hope that you will engage the homeschooling community in any discussion relevant to this issue. We believe that once you get to know the homeschooling community and the commitment of these families, you will understand the reasons why this fundamental freedom must be actively preserved.

We will close with one quote from the Kaseman article:

It does not make sense to regulate and judge all homeschools in order to prevent a few people from homeschooling, especially since restrictive legislation interferes with homeschools that are working well. An old legal maxim states, "Hard cases make bad law."

We agree. We hope you will join us in another honorable and time tested fundamental freedom, that is: Innocent until proven guilty.

Sincerely,

Mary Nix

Peggy Daly-Masternak

Enclosure

Cc: Representative Edna Brown
State Senator Teresa Fedor
Representative Dale Miller
Representative Tom Patton
State Senator Bob Spada