

Dear Rep. Stairs, Rep. Rohrer, and other members of the House Education Committee,  
from Nancy Emerson

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Thank you for holding the hearing last week on HB2560. Although it was informative to a certain degree, I do not believe it painted an accurate picture of homeschoolers' opinions of the bill. It certainly did not present mine.

I am a long-term homeschooling mother of four (ages 20- homeschool graduate, 15, 14, and 6.) I have been very involved in the homeschooling community, serving as leader of homeschoolers in the Harrisburg area for approximately five years (around 1988-1993), and continuing my involvement in that group and others since then. I was involved back in 1988 supporting the legislative effort for our current law, even though it meant I would be "giving up an easy life of homeschooling." (My school district, Northern York, was considered a "friendly" district in that homeschoolers had no problem getting approved to homeschool, and after approval, there was very little required of us in terms of accountability.) I decided to work for the bill because:

1. The bill recognized parental rights (eliminating the unfair need to get approval in order to homeschool),
2. Due process procedures were included, and
3. Requirements of homeschoolers were spelled out clearly " all of which could no longer change if the superintendent changed, or if you moved to another district in PA. I still strongly believe in these things.

I am all for changes in the homeschool law. Many requirements have no real value either for the child or for the school district. However, this bill goes too far.

There are GREAT things about our current law; I, for one, highly value the accountability it sets up, especially in doing portfolios and meeting with an evaluator of our own choice. We are so encouraged each year when we go through those steps! I do not believe that those requirements are "burdensome."

I am disappointed that Rep. Rohrer introduced a bill that is so divisive in the homeschooling community. The homeschooling community is actually a diverse population, and yet we have gotten along rather well over the years. This is no longer the case " mainly because of the questionable effect this bill would have on diploma programs.

Our family really appreciates our diploma program (PHAA, the one started by Dr. Richman.) It serves us well. It's wonderful having a 3rd party involved, holding up standards. It makes it so much easier to come alongside your child, helping them to "conquer that long research paper", for example " as opposed to being the tough guy all the time.

These programs are working well. There is NO need to end state recognition of them.

Rep. Rohrer said in his closing remarks that it never was (and currently is not) the intent of this bill to end these programs. I want to know why he didn't get back to Dr. Richman to let him

know that the language of the bill would not be what he had indicated previously regarding the diploma programs. That is very upsetting to me. Without notice, Dr. Richman could not alert anyone who would be concerned about this. I would appreciate hearing Rep. Rohrer's explanation.

Even though the bill does not include diploma programs in the actual wording, as Rep. Rohrer stated, the broad-sweeping language of the bill would effectively end the PA Dept. of Education policy that recognizes these diplomas. This would end the program AS WE KNOW IT NOW. And, no one can say for certain what the long-term effect would be on these programs. In fact, Rep. Rohrer could PROVE that it never was (and is not) the intent of this bill to end diploma programs by simply adding an amendment to protect state recognition of these programs. In fact, there is no reason why the state could not recognize both parent-issued diplomas and program-issued diplomas. However, I do not believe that HB2560, even with such an amendment, is the best way to make changes to the homeschool law.

It was stated that those who have parent-issued diplomas are being discriminated against. This may be true, but *\*only\** in the situation where superintendents will not sign the needed papers for those students who have complied with the law to qualify for PHEAA grants. (Perhaps this is an issue to be taken up with the superintendents and school districts. HB2560 is not the proper remedy for this problem.)

I certainly don't mind opening up new ways to comply with homeschool law for those who desire that, but it is wrong to change a method that works well for many families, including my own. I believe there is a better way to make changes to the homeschool law. Should this bill get passed on to the House, I am very concerned about all the potential amendments that could be added there and in the Senate.

I urge you to vote against HB2560 and to not let this bill out of your committee. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nancy Emerson

Nancy Emerson is a long-term homeschooler of four children, a teacher at homeschool co-ops and the former dynamic leader of the Harrisburg Area Homeschool Association, one of the largest and most vibrant support groups in the state. [Read more about HB 2560](#)