

**Testimony on Senate Bill 809, related to homeschooling,
By Brian D. Ray, Ph.D.**

April 04, 2013

Honorable Madams, Sirs, and Fellow Citizens,

Thank you for allowing me to read the testimony of my father, Brian D. Ray, regarding Senate Bill 809. He regrets that he cannot be here and travel to Missouri at the same time.

My father is Dr. Brian Ray, and he is an Oregonian. He holds a Ph.D. in science education from Oregon State University, M.S. in zoology from Ohio University, a B.S. in biology from the University of Puget Sound, and a teaching degree from Oregon State University. He is a former classroom teacher in public and private schools and professor of education. He has been doing original research and following the research of others on homeschooling for about 30 years. Dr. Ray is an internationally known expert on education in general, and home-based education in particular. Here is the testimony.

There are three four main reasons why this bill is a good idea and should be passed.

First, there is no empirical or research-based reason for the State mandating that students in this form of private education, homeschooling, be administered achievement tests. Two major nationwide studies, that included Oregon, found no correlation between the degree of State control or regulation of homeschooling and homeschool students' test scores. That is, not even a correlation or pattern of association. There must be at least a correlation for anyone to claim there might be a cause-and-effect relationship between state regulation and test scores. There is not even a correlation.

One of these studies involved over 5,000 students and the other over 11,000 students. Both were done by me, and both were published in academic journals.

Second, homeschool students in Oregon and across the nation score, on average, 15 to 30 percentile points higher than public school students. Study after study for 25 years by others and myself show this. And there are many important reasons why they do, or do not, do so well.

Homeschool students do not score above average because States control them more or less. They do not score above average because their parents have or have not been State-certified teachers. They do not score above average because they have high or low incomes. They do not score well because homeschooling families get any tax dollars from their neighbors or the State.

However, homeschoolers do very well, on average, because

- (a) they get an individualized or customized education,
- (b) plenty of curriculum materials and learning co-operatives are available to them,
- (c) they get a lot of one-on-one instruction,
- (d) they have fewer distractions than in an institutional school,
- (e) they experience a very small class size,
- (f) their schooling time includes a high proportion of academic engaged time,

- (g) they can master the knowledge and skills before moving on instead of moving on because the material must get covered by the end of May,
- (h) there is a lot of social capital involved in their education, and
- (i) they have teachers who love them so much they will teach for free, no salary.

The third reason that SB 809 is a good idea is that it is fairer and more equitable than the current law regarding homeschooling. The current law penalizes parents and children who score below a certain percentile by potentially forcing the child to attend a public or private institutional school. It treats the parent and the child as failures and blames the homeschooling. If a public school student scores below 15th percentile – and about 15 percent of them do – the teacher, school, parent, and child are not all blamed and the student is not forced by the State to attend private school or be homeschooled. (Nor are private school students and parents treated this way.)

Along these lines, the State does not control and regulate the teaching, learning, and test scores of Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, New Age, and secular or atheist private schools and their students, parents, and teachers. Homeschooling is also private education and does not take tax dollars and should not be under the control of or be accountable to the State. The current homeschool law is discriminatory, biased, and unfair.

Finally, the fourth reason is that there is intense national debate by scholars, educators, and policymakers about the wisdom and effectiveness of using test scores to control and try to improve teaching and learning in public schools. These people, based on mountains and decades of research, cannot even come to solid and valid conclusions about using tests to regulated public schools that are funded by many millions of taxpayers' dollars. With that ambiguity and constant debate in mind, it makes even less sense – actually, no sense – to try to use testing and test scores to control and regulate private homeschoolers. There is no research to suggest such is a good idea and, furthermore, homeschoolers do not take a penny of money from their neighbor taxpayers.

In conclusion, SB 809 should be promoted and passed for several very good reasons. It is based on research, and no research contradicts it. Second, homeschool students do well academically for several obvious and sound reasons and not because some law requires them to be tested. Thirds, this proposed law is much fairer and equitable than the current situation. Oregon homeschools today are treated by the State of Oregon as a second-class educational choice and this is done in a biased and discriminatory way with absolutely no basis. Finally, the public-school world in Oregon and across the nation has no sound agreement on the value of achievement testing to control learning in tax-funded public schools. It makes no sense at all, and there is no research base to support the idea of using testing to control and regulate the private form of education called homeschooling, that costs Oregon taxpayers nothing and saves them millions of dollars every year.

I eagerly welcome you to communicate with me about any my testimony.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Ray, Ph.D.

Salem, Oregon 503-364-1490 bray@nheri.org ### end ###