



**Date:** April 4, 2013  
**To:** Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee, Chair Hass and Members  
**From:** Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant  
**RE:** *SB 809 [Removal of Homeschooling Accountability]*

On behalf of OEA's 43,000 members, I am submitting testimony in opposition to SB 809, which would remove the minimal safeguards found in Oregon law with respect to homeschooling. Our members believe that the state has an interest in protecting the rights of children to obtain an education, just as it protects children's right to medical care.

This bill has come before the Oregon Legislature session after session. In prior years, we have brought forward testimony of truant officers, school officials, and other citizens who have documented the fact that in a small percentage of families, children who are not in school are actually receiving insufficient or no educational services at all. Not only does this deprive children of the opportunity for a brighter future when this happens, but it also ends up costing school districts when remediation is necessary upon re-entry of the student to the public school system. To be sure, you will hear many glowing stories of the accomplishments of homeschooled children whose educational progress, benefited by dedicated parents able to provide 1:1 ratios of teacher to student, is well-known and undisputed. We acknowledge the devotion of these families to their home education programs. Their success, however, does not remove the concern that some children will fall irretrievably through the cracks without at least Oregon's minimal accountability requirements.

In addition to our members' concerns about children's educational access, we also note that homeschooling has occasionally been used to isolate children who are in dangerous home circumstances. It was only after Jeanette Maples' teacher reported suspected child abuse that her parents removed her from school to "home school" her, and tragically, ultimately caused her death by abuse. Though this is a rare and extreme example, it happened in Oregon, and in recent years. If anything, Oregon's regulation of homeschooling is perhaps too minimal, not too intrusive.

A few years ago, we initiated discussions with the main groups advocating for zero testing or registration. To their objection that a state-directed test might influence the curriculum choices they would be required to make for their children, we proposed a compromise that included other forms of assessment of learning gains and content knowledge in lieu of a smaller set of testing options. To their objection that the state would have a "say" in the matter at all, however, we do not agree, as noted above. Our attempt to craft a compromise bill was ultimately rejected just

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prior to the 2007 Legislative Session, despite the willingness of their Senate sponsor to champion such a bill were we able to agree to language.

We hope that this committee will not move this bill, in recognition of the fact that the children who need you most to have their back are **not** the students in this hearing room, but the neglected ones whose families are not caravanning to the Capitol to participate in our civic processes. Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.