

To: MN House Education Policy Committee  
c/o Laura Taken-Holtze

From: Bonnie Erpelding, M.S. Ecology  
Home Educator of 23 years  
Kasson, MN

Re: Testimony - Omnibus bill, walk-through on March 10, 2021  
- Submitting test scores to school district

Date: March 9, 2021, 3:00 pm

Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

Please admit this memo as written testimony opposed to the language in the above-stated bill, adding a requirement for Home Educators to submit their student's test scores to the School Superintendent's office each year.

Almost exactly 20 years ago on March 21, 2001, the Senate Education Committee heard testimony on *this very same matter*. I testified at that hearing, in person, as did my 8 year old daughter at the time. The Senate Committee unanimously voted to reject the proposed rule change due to the many valid reasons presented that day by numerous sources.

I'll cut to the chase, in case you haven't time to read my whole argument below. The purpose for testing or assessing a child is to determine if they have retained the information they've been taught, to find out if there are significant gaps in their learning, and to make adjustments as necessary to the student's curriculum, setting or test-taking protocol. This information is only useful for the teacher. It serves no purpose in the files of a superintendent's office.

Today, after home educating 4 of my 5 children through High School, and still have one remaining student in our home (a 14 yr old Freshman in High School), I contend that those valid reasons have not changed. I would

argue that we have 20 more years of evidence as to why there is no logical or pedagogical reason to add this burden on to home schooling families or to the Superintendent's office.

MN Statute 120.101 subd. 1 states that "The parent of a child is primarily responsible for assuring that the child acquires the knowledge and skills that are essential for effective citizenship." This mandate to parents and freedom for parents, has been fulfilled thousands of times over in the state of MN alone, much less, millions nationwide. These students are now the nurses, social workers, carpenters, doctors, lawyers, farmers, engineers, truck drivers, civil servants, and yes, even politicians who have demonstrated that they were home educated with integrity and skill. Their parents administered the standardized tests required by law, made adjustments to curriculum, if needed, and successfully graduated their students into the world of work, family and community.

Parents are first and foremost responsible for their children's education as clearly stated in the aforementioned statute. According to this same statute, the Department of Education already has oversight over reporting requirements, and home schools communicate directly to their local superintendents' offices with regards to administering standardized tests in the home, class schedules, methods of assessment according to law. Parents also have the option of letting their student take the tests in the local public school. This same statute states, "Documenttation will be presented for examination, for the purposes of monitoring compliance with M.S. 102.101". Therefore, there is already in place a policy of checks and balances to keep everybody honest. This has proven successful for nearly 4 decades in this state. There is no valid reason to change a system that works very well. Nor is there any valid reason to interfere with the teacher-student relationship and privacy afforded them by the current law. It is the teacher that needs to see the test scores to determine the progress of each student, not the Superintendent, nor the Department of Education.

Furthermore, in 2011, School Superintendents were glad to see the paperwork reduction bill passed, relieving them from the unnecessary burden of tracking home school families' test scores and report cards.

The issue is really one of accountability and freedom – Who is accountable to whom? We have school boards elected by parents, and these school boards in turn hire superintendents. So the school districts are accountable to the parents, not the other way around.

Families have many resources at their disposal to help them along the journey of educating their children: Public schools, private schools, testing services, reading centers, online academies, home school cooperatives, private tutoring services, etc... The varied and many options have become much more accessible and available over the last 20 years, further reducing the need for any intrusion by the school district.

In closing, I would like to add that I have personally worked, schooled, tutored, and labored alongside *hundreds* of home schooled families in southern Minnesota over my 23 year career (and counting) as a home educator. Many of our friends have freely chosen their curricula, tests, tutors, coops and methods to meet their family's needs and tailor their home schooling journey to get the job done successfully. It has truly been a beautiful exercise of American freedom and excellence at its best in my experience. I am grateful that Minnesota's laws have guaranteed our family that freedom over these past couple of decades.

My, now 28 year old daughter, nurse, and mother of three, who testified as an 8 year old 20 years ago, is beginning the journey of homeschooling alongside her 30 year old homeschooled husband. Please do not add additional burdens and restrictions to her family, and my grandchildren. Keep MN as free as possible in the realm of educational choice, and watch its citizen's thrive!

Thank you for considering this testimony and please remove any language from this omnibus bill that foists more requirements upon our hardworking, home schooling families.