Mr. David T. Dennis  
Chair, Kansas State Board of Education  
615 N. Rainbow Lake Road  
Wichita, KS 67235

Re: Open letter Regarding Your Recent Statement about Proposing Homeschool Legislation

Dear Mr. Dennis:

By way of introduction, the Home School Legal Defense Association is a national organization that has as its primary purpose the protection of the right of parents to direct the education of their children. We presently have more than 80,000 member families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with over 1,400 member families in Kansas.

You were recently quoted as saying that perhaps the board should propose legislation to increase reporting requirements for home schoolers. (LJWorld.com)

The Kansas State Board of Education has no jurisdiction over non-accredited private schools. The board would be acting outside its authority in proposing legislation regarding non-accredited private schools, including home-based private schools. The legislature and the people of Kansas expect the Board to spend its resources on its lawful, designated mission.

Private schools are already held to a higher standard than public schools. Kansas Statute 72-1111(a) mandates that the teachers of private schools be competent. Parents who teach their children at home via a non-accredited private school can be required to prove their competence before a prosecutor and judge—not before a panel of fellow homeschool parents.

Would you be willing for public school teachers to be subjected to proving their competence before a prosecutor and impartial judge, neither of whom are public school teachers? I expect not. That would be a tough standard. But that is the standard under which every homeschool family in Kansas lives. I am not boasting idly when I say our standards are already higher.
Any type of new regulation you might think of has already been implemented somewhere in America. But adding more red tape would help no one. A 1997 study by Dr. Brian D. Ray (National Home Education Research Institute) showed that the academic performance of homeschooled children in states with low homeschool regulation is exactly the same as homeschooled children in states with high regulation. The simple fact is that adding red tape would not help kids.

Adult illiteracy in Seward County is 31%. In Finney County, it’s 23%. In Ford County it’s 21% (2003 data). These are the products of public schools. By way of contrast, the largest study of homeschool students ever (by Dr. Lawrence M. Rudner, University of Maryland, 1999) showed that the average homeschool 8th grader scores the same on standardized tests as a public school 12th grader.

Considering that fact that homeschoolers outperform public schools kids by an astonishing 4 grade levels, does it really make sense to put the public school establishment in charge of home schools? I don’t think any objective person would think so.

The problems in Kansas public schools are many and serious. I urge you to devote your full attention to them.

Sincerely yours,

Scott A. Woodruff, Senior Counsel
Home School Legal Defense Association

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