As has been often stated since 2020 began, we are certainly living in unprecedented times.

In February, there were already over two million children being taught at home in the United States. When the dust settles after COVID-19, we could see a doubling in the number of homeschooled students.

While homeschooling might not be the first choice for many of these parents, some will keep going with it when they experience the benefits of closer family relationships, kids who are more engaged in learning, and the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their children are being taught in a safe environment.

At least, that was the experience of my family—and has been for hundreds of thousands of others.

It is dramatic to think how much the homeschooling landscape has changed since 1981, when my wife and I started homeschooling. Very few families taught their own kids at the time, and the educational establishment in California, where we lived, was hostile to the idea.

But since then, homeschooling has become a widely accepted alternative to traditional public and private education. This is due in part to HSLDA’s efforts, starting in 1983, to make it legal and accessible in every state.

Today’s homeschoolers face a different set of challenges than my wife and I—and thousands of other homeschooling parents—faced in the early ‘80s. A worldwide pandemic is forcing them to make swift decisions about what is best for their children’s health and education, while technology that I could not have even imagined in 1981 is both helping and hindering the learning process.

Parents are launching into homeschooling while remaining six feet away from the fellow homeschoolers who would normally serve as close advisors and advocates and amidst restrictions that affect their children’s access to socializing and extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, opposition to homeschooling still arises from family, friends, and academics.

That is a lot for homeschooling families to overcome. But together with you, HSLDA can help.

We believe we are uniquely poised at this moment in history to defend
and equip the newest members of the homeschool community. In the 2019–20 fiscal year alone, through your support of HSLDA's Freedom work and Compassion Grants, we accomplished the following:

• Sent 141 email alerts mobilizing local homeschool communities to contact their elected officials about legislation that, if passed, could have negatively affected homeschooling

• Won a court case in New York City ensuring that families won’t be subject to potential truancy charges caused by district delays in processing paperwork

• Equipped 790 families with grants for curriculum, school materials, and disaster recovery

• Added several companies to the nearly 40 vendors that offer significant discounts to Compassion Grant recipients, helping these struggling families stretch their educational dollars even further

In the current fiscal year (2020–21), we’ve also taken steps to better serve the significantly increasing numbers of homeschool families:

• This summer, we partnered with the VELA Education Fund to disburse $400,000 in Meet the Moment grants to homeschool groups across the country who are creatively serving a growing homeschool population.

• At the end of this report, I invite you to read about what HSLDA is doing to help equip families who are beginning to homeschool because of COVID-19. We look forward to helping them accomplish their goals and successfully complete their homeschooling journeys.

We believe our efforts to protect freedom, equip families to flourish, and provide support through Compassion Grants will make the difference for many parents in choosing to continue homeschooling after the pandemic rather than send their children back to school.

Thank you for partnering with us to make all this possible. We deeply appreciate your support and prayers at this pivotal time.

Sincerely,

J. Michael Smith
President
Building Up Hope through Compassion and Service

784 low-income families received curriculum grants
  1,684 children served
  19 children had special needs
16 recovering families received disaster relief grants
  42 children served
509 families received financial aid for HSLDA membership
99 bereaved families received gift books and sympathy notes
46 homeschool groups received education grants
46 families received grants from HSLDA Ambassadors

Learning Together about Love and Compassion

When Renee and Bryan applied for a curriculum grant for two of their children, Renee was pregnant with their fifth little girl, Kit. Kit had been diagnosed in utero with a severe, life-threatening heart defect, and the family knew that many difficult days lay ahead of them.

Anticipating doctor appointments and hospital stays, friends strongly discouraged them from homeschooling that year. Instead of stopping, Renee and Bryan reached out to HSLDA.

In a letter that brought tears to our eyes, Renee told us, “Thank you for the grant—it encouraged us to keep homeschooling, which was the exact right fit for our family. Because we homeschooled, I was able to bring my four other daughters to see Kit almost every day.”

Renee described how being able to do schoolwork in the ICU room,
listen to audiobooks in the car, and use the weekend for science experiments helped the girls stay focused on their studies. It also gave them and their baby sister sweet time together, precious moments they would have lost had they gone to traditional school that year.

“I wouldn’t say we made the most homeschool progress I’ve ever seen, but we kept learning—so much more than what was in the books, but also about love, compassion, and countless aspects of hospital life,” Renee wrote.

“After our daughter Kit was born, she spent 17 days in the NICU, six weeks at home, then three months in the CICU before passing away after her open-heart surgery. Homeschooling has been a balm to us as we’ve been grieving—we can take our days slow, take a break when we need to, and visit Kit’s grave whenever we choose.”

Reflecting on the past 18 months, Renee and Bryan realized that their conviction to continue homeschooling through hardship helped bring a little more peace to their home. Without the need to shuffle the girls back and forth to school, the time pressure to complete assignments and projects, and the inflexibility of a traditional school schedule, the family has been able to grieve and heal.

An update on Renee and Bryan’s family:

“In August, God gave us another child—our first boy—nicknamed ‘Bear.’ Our girls are so in love. God has blessed us.”
Freedom Fund and Compassion Ministry*
April 2019–March 2020

REVENUES
Private gifts and grants to Freedom $650,323
Private gifts and grants to Compassion $1,484,768
Noncash contributions $40,251
Investment income $28,199
Other income† $38,146
Total Revenues $2,241,687

EXPENSES
Program Expenses
Ministry and compassion to homeschool families in need $1,162,477
Legal defense and protecting homeschool freedom $574,091
Total program expenses $1,736,568

Support Services
Fundraising and development $122,282
Management and general $56,159
Total support expenses $178,441

Total Expenses $1,915,009
Cash Surplus $326,678

*Supplemental information from audited financial statements adjusted for joint costs
† Includes HSLDA contest revenue and royalties from retailers
Program Expenses

- **Curriculum Grants** to families—$567,116
- Widows and widowers—$95,215
- Single-parent families—$166,885
- Military families—$33,315
- Other families in need—$271,701
- **Freedom Fund** for legal defense—$574,091
- **Student service awards**—$6,600
- **Educational grants** for groups—$43,900
- **Ambassador grants** to families—$29,152
- **Disaster Relief** and other home emergency grants—$24,540

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Safeguarding a Foundation of Freedom

1,859 government officials contacted
797 discrimination cases represented
9,877 general legal questions answered
179 state email alerts sent
21 court appearances by HSLDA attorneys

Two years after HSLDA sued Virginia’s Franklin County School Board for demanding more homeschool documentation from the Sosebee family than the law required, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in favor of the family, affirming that parents who comply with the commonwealth’s home instruction statute have a legal right to teach their children at home.

On June 11, 2020, the Supreme Court of Virginia ordered the Franklin County Circuit Court to declare the board’s policy of requiring additional documents unlawful and to issue an injunction that will prevent the board from enforcing it against families in the future. The decision was unanimous.

“We could not have faced last year’s challenges without the help of the HSLDA team. You took a toxic legal situation and completely turned around the outcome, calming my fears in the meantime. A simple thank-you is not enough. Please know that I have the highest respect for what you do for homeschoolers every day. Thank you again.”

— Kate, homeschooling mom
Name changed to protect privacy
Equipping Families to Flourish

Any homeschool parent knows that homeschooling is both deeply rewarding and extremely challenging, even in the most supportive circumstances.

Now imagine Tamara*—a single mom new to homeschooling—who called HSLDA for direction about curriculum. As Tamara shared her story with one of our educational consultants, we learned that she and her children were living in a shelter—they were homeless homeschoolers.

The consultant brainstormed with Tamara and found ways for her to teach without textbooks, computers, a printer, or workbooks. Then Tamara got busy—creating flash cards, borrowing library books, and showing educational videos to her kids on her phone.

HSLDA has gotten busy, too. We're building an outreach program to support homeless homeschooling families. And we're partnering with curriculum providers and friends like you to freely supply families like Tamara’s with the needed resources.

While homeless homeschoolers are extremely rare, in just a few months HSLDA’s educational consultants have identified four such families. We can’t formally reach out to this demographic, but we want to help them. If you become aware of a homeless homeschool family in your city, church, or another group you are involved in, please let us know by emailing HSLDA Director of Outreach and Consulting Heather Frommack at hfrommack@hslda.org.

Tamara is now homeschooling with greater confidence, thanks to the support of HSLDA’s educational consultants, caring curriculum providers, and your generosity!

*Name changed to protect privacy
I cannot express our gratitude to you for providing financial assistance to our family. With three children with profound disabilities, having therapy equipment and curriculum in our home makes it possible to homeschool all of them. We are thankful every time we use something that we were able to purchase because of the grant!

— Christi, Curriculum Grant recipient

Our Programs Make Homeschooling Possible…

Your gift helps HSLDA carry out each aspect of our mission:

- **Defend** thousands of families each year from discrimination and the illegal demands of local schools
- **Litigate** cases in which government officials threaten homeschool freedoms
- **Monitor** state homeschool laws and equip concerned citizens to respond to proposed legislation
- **Promote** homeschooling abroad and help defend families globally from invasive search and seizure
- **Educate** lawmakers and the public about the immeasurable value of a personalized education

… in Hard Times.

Through your support of HSLDA Compassion, we are able to help struggling homeschoolers in the following ways:

- **Offer** curriculum grants to help low-income parents such as widows, single parents, military personnel, and others afford educational expenses, including testing and therapies for children with special needs
- **Provide** disaster relief grants to families recovering from natural disasters
- **Equip** volunteer HSLDA Ambassadors to personally help homeschoolers in their own communities

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Here is how HSLDA is responding to the effects of COVID-19 on education:

- Revamped MomPossible.org to become a crisis-specific microsite with videos, downloads, and other content focused on helping parents make decisions about their school options
- Created a free-to-join mentoring group, where new or prospective homeschool moms can connect with experienced homeschoolers to learn about getting started
- Closely monitoring state testing and evaluation requirements and notifying constituents when requirements are altered because of the coronavirus
- Partnering with the VELA Education Fund not only to assist homeschool groups, but also to offer more free memberships to low-income families who are new to homeschooling
- Hosting a how-to-homeschool webinar series to help new homeschoolers plan their fall
- Continuing our daily work of advancing homeschool freedoms and making legal and educational resources available to homeschoolers both in the U.S. and around the world
- Launched YouCanHomeschool.com to provide information about homeschooling to families considering it due to school closures
I love HSLDA. It’s such a relief to know that they’re looking after families like my own and the right to homeschool. I feel like they truly care about their work and all of us!

– Amanda, HSLDA member and donor