



Indiana Association of Home Educators

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School to Prison Pipeline IAHE Testimony

Indiana Advisory Council to the United States Commission on Civil Rights

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April 20, 2016

There's no place like home as Dorothy once said. Rather than a disordered, random patchwork, home education in Indiana is truly a yellow brick road to real educational order and success, unlike the fictional Oz. Thank you for allowing the Indiana Association of Home Educators (IAHE) an opportunity to respond to the previous testimony.

Far from being a lawless Wild West, Indiana is a model state for homeschooling. Whomever made such a contrary statement is unfamiliar with mainstream homeschooling in Indiana and the laws guiding home education. We have adequate provisions to ensure responsible home education with a visible and active state homeschool organization which helps parents meet the educational goals, including religious training and special education needs of their children. IAHE contends the real problem discussed in the previous testimony is not found in homeschooling, but within the public school system.

Home educators in Indiana must maintain attendance records for all children from the age of 7 to 18 years with generally 180 days of instruction per year documented for each child. At any time, the Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction may ask homeschool parents for their attendance records to ensure instruction is taking place. In addition, the Indiana Code (IC 20-33-2-28) requires parents to provide an equivalent education to the public schools. If a parent is in violation of any of these

provisions, they can and should be prosecuted accordingly. **The children the transcript refers to as being “homeschooled” cannot be homeschoolers because instruction in the home by the parent has not been provided.** If the parents are not following the Indiana law, they do not qualify as homeschoolers. **Rather, these children are truants.**

The Indiana Association of Home Educators (IAHE) has long suspected principals were encouraging parents of problem students to reclassify the students as homeschooled. We are glad to see the speaker has publicly confirmed our suspicions. IAHE receives calls from parents whose children have been pushed out of public school. Many of these parents contact us requesting to “enroll their student” for someone else to teach. They do not understand that as a homeschooler, the PARENT is the one who gladly takes full responsibility for teaching their child. When these parents come to understand they are fully responsible, they are not at all interested in home education. In many cases the public school has already reported the child’s enrollment as a homeschooler to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) despite the fact the parents are wholly unfamiliar with this form of education. We refer these parents back to the public school or to the IDOE for reevaluation. **Home education needs to be a parent-driven decision and not a public school dumping ground.** It is a weighty responsibility that is not to be taken lightly.

In our view, the current Indiana Code relating to home education does not need to be changed. **We do agree that the practice of principals encouraging parents to reclassify their children as homeschoolers when the principal knows the parent does not intend to actually homeschool must be stopped.**

“Change of Placement” for a student enrolled in the public school system comes with responsibility on the part of the schools to ensure children are placed in an appropriate educational environment. The casual attitude with which school principals refer troubled students with behavior issues to home education is reckless and not in the best interest of the child. Homeschooling is not the root cause of this problem. More regulation of homeschoolers will not end principal misuse of the homeschool category. In addition, research shows that there is no correlation between the degree of state control/regulation of homeschooling and home-educated students’ academic achievement (Ray, 2010).¹ There are solutions to this problem and IAHE has suggestions for the state to curb the problem without harming the freedom of conscientious parents who choose to direct the education of their child.

¹ Ray, Brian D. (2010, February 3). Academic achievement and demographic traits of homeschool students: A nationwide study. *Academic Leadership Journal*, 8(1) [a peer-reviewed journal]. Retrieved April 19, 2016 from <http://www.nheri.org/AcademicAchievementAndDemographicTraitsOfHomeschoolStudentsRay2010.pdf>.

One of the recommendations Ms. Daniels made for correcting this issue is for more education and training of parents on home education. This should not be a function of the public school system. IAHE has been performing this task for the last 33 years. IAHE already offers a wide range of options for parents to become familiar with home education, as well as the rights and responsibilities of parents who choose to homeschool. As a means of connecting new homeschoolers to the support needed in their local area, IAHE has 16 experienced homeschooling couples who voluntarily serve as Regional Representatives. Each Representative is a 'veteran' homeschooler who can answer questions from parents starting their homeschooling years. In addition, IAHE regional representatives host free "You Can Homeschool" events to make sure families start off on the right track. We also maintain an active Facebook page with over 5,000 "Likes", a website with resources, podcasts and recommendations for new homeschoolers as well as publishing *The Informer* magazine, with over 7,500 subscribers, containing articles of interest to home educators. Every public library in the state of Indiana is sent a copy of *The Informer* for their patrons' use. Our email newsletter is sent out weekly to over 6,000 families with events and opportunities. Once a year, we host a large homeschooling convention featuring guest speakers, vendor exhibit hall and educational activities at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Last year's attendance at the convention was over 5,000 people. IAHE is a non-profit organization committed to informing, educating and supporting homeschool families in Indiana.

In fact, we are having our Convention at the Indiana State Fairgrounds on April 29-30, 2016, offering specific classes for parents new to homeschooling and other classes to help parents continue to improve as they homeschool their children. This will be our 31st annual Convention.

In addition, this year, IAHE has invited the National Black Home Educators to speak about the National Home Education Research Institute's study on "African American Homeschool Parents' Motivation for Homeschooling and Their Black Children's Academic Achievement". We invite the members of the USCCR-Indiana Advisory Council to attend this event.

As you can see, IAHE is not invisible. We are quite easily found for anyone seeking information on home education in Indiana. Training and education in homeschooling is readily available to those who want it, regardless of income. As a matter of fact, we are listed as a resource on the IDOE's website for homeschooling. Hoosiers for Quality Education also lists us as a resource for further exploration of this

form of education.

Many mistakenly believe home education is only available to affluent families. Nothing could be further from the truth. Low-income families, as well as middle and upper-income parents, have successfully educated their children at home. The single largest expense in a homeschool budget is curriculum. Used and free curriculum is readily available to the resourceful homeschool family. Throughout the year, used curriculum sales, both online or at a regional book sale, can help families obtain their chosen books at a fraction of the price of new ones. Further, it is possible to buy curriculum to use for a year and then sell it the next year for the same amount you purchased it, thus completely recovering the amount paid in the first place. Free online curriculum is also available. IAHE has put together a Pinterest page of free or low cost curricula for new homeschoolers. This is one more example of the many resources available through IAHE, for free, to Hoosier home educators.

On page 152, Ms. Smart is quoted as saying, "But what we have learned is the most at-risk student can succeed if there is one adult in the building who is crazy about that kid, and that can be your janitor, that can be a teacher, that could be your media specialist, it doesn't matter, but just that one simple free intervention makes a huge difference." IAHE could not agree more. **A parent, crazy about their child, makes all the difference in the world to the child's educational outcome.** For multiple reasons, homeschool parents throughout Indiana have chosen to take on the responsibility of educating their child.

A major reason for many parents choose home education is based on their belief that it is their God-given responsibility to instruct their children in accordance with their religious convictions. Christian homeschoolers find ample reason to home educate in the Bible. In Deuteronomy, parents are told to instruct their children all day long in everything they do. The sixth chapter of Luke reminds parents that students will become like their teacher. The Book of Wisdom, Proverbs, instructs us that wisdom comes from God and understanding from His mouth. According to the National Black Home Educators association, who also submitted written testimony for today's discussion, three of the top 5 reasons cited among African-American homeschoolers dealt with religious, moral instruction and the desire to transmit those beliefs to their children. Home education to many families is an act of obedience to their beliefs and an exercise of religious liberty. It is my understanding a major point of contention in the school choice debate is the use of public funds for religious purposes. If one truly believes taxpayer

money has no business supporting a family's private religious beliefs, then government funding and control has no business in home education. The introduction of government-funded homeschooling is the first step to a loss of religious liberty and academic freedom.

On page 222, Mr. Douglas says, "On that topic of people coming -- home schoolers or people coming back from alternative sources of education back into public schools, are you seeing whether they are returning at pace with their peers or behind? And I have to admit, I have anecdotal evidence from a principal in Kokomo years ago who was making a comment to me that kids were coming back from home schooling badly behind, I was curious whether that was just an anecdote or a bigger problem."

Mr. Douglas inadvertently touched upon the second major reason for all homeschoolers, African-American homeschoolers in particular, to home educate. The overwhelming majority of parents want to give their children the best education possible, especially those with special needs. **Many families have found great success bringing their children home to tailor education to the needs and demands of the child rather than forcing the child to conform to the needs and demands of the school.** At IAHE, we regularly hear stories about how students have re-ignited their love of learning once placed in a home environment during instructional time. We have a growing list of testimonials of children who were behind in public school, but are now thriving in home education. In preparation for today's hearing, we began asking our members if they had a story they would like to share with the Indiana Advisory Committee. You can find their stories on our website at: <http://www.iahe.net/testimonials>.

Not every child thrives in an institutional education environment. As a result, many children who are subjected to the framework of classroom instruction can fall behind. In fact, Ms. Clemens from Decoding Dyslexia Indiana testified to this fact. Many parents pull their children who are already underperforming academically from the public school system. A child who has fallen behind by two or three years in public school will sometimes take years of consistent hard work at home to claw his/her way back into parity with their peers. Should life circumstances require the child's re-entry into the public system, it would not be at all surprising to learn the child was behind his/her peers. He/she was already behind prior to the child's time spent as a homeschooler.

In conclusion, the current crisis of children being expelled from public school, "transferred to homeschooling" at the direction of the school's principal, and now appearing to be "lost" never involved

committed homeschool students and cannot be solved by regulating home education. IAHE, as a network of parents whom highly esteem education, urge correction of the “change of placement” procedure for expelled public school students. IAHE will continue to carry out our mission to support Indiana parents who freely decide to homeschool while fighting taxpayer funding of home education. For some Indiana school-age children, there’s just no place like home for learning.