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MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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ADMINISTRATIVE RULES, VICE CHAIR
EDUCATION REFORM
ENERGY POLICY
REGULATORY REFORM

September 28, 2017

Dear Chairman Kelly and Members of the Education Reform Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony before the Committee on my legislation, House Bill 4805, which would remove the requirement that homeschooled students who take courses at public schools submit education development plans.

The development of more personalized education programs is cause for celebration. Every young mind has a unique set of talents and challenges, a unique set of passions and dislikes, and a unique set of circumstances that will ultimately impact who they grow up to be. Children need diverse choices in their education to match their own diversity. There are advantages and disadvantages to all types of education programs, and allowing parents to choose the best aspects of each option for their children ultimately provides these children with a more vibrant educational environment.

Shared time partnerships, where homeschooled students take courses offered by public schools, allow children to benefit from the best of both worlds. They can make use of the tools and training offered by our public schools in some instances, and they can enjoy the freedom offered by homeschool environments in others.

These experiences enrich the schools as well as the students. Janet Schell, principal of Oxford Virtual Academy whose testimony you will hear today, said it best: "[Shared-time students] are the incubators of innovation."

Five or ten years ago, one could not imagine an 11-year-old student utilizing video games intended only for entertainment to learn computer science. Yet now students are learning to program computers with the Minecraft video game. All students deserve access to the tools that best match their individual needs.

Allowing homeschooled students to make use of public school programs creates mutually beneficial relationships between these families and their schools.

Requiring these students to complete educational development plans (EDPs) erodes the trust formed between homeschooling families and public schools. Many if not most homeschooling families cherish their freedom and are skeptical of even the smallest of government efforts to influence the direction of their children's education.

EDPs ask a student to plan their long-term future at an age when many children are years from finding their calling in life. EDPs may include a review of test scores, an analysis of career goals, a study of literature on job markets, a consideration of personal interests, and a plan of action.

While the intention of EDPs is noble, it's certainly reasonable to question whether their methodology is effective. Many students enter college without a clear idea of what they wish to do with their lives. It's questionable whether middle school children will be able to use these tools correctly. It's questionable whether test data is useful in assessing career interests.

Whatever the answers, imposing upon homeschooling students a requirement that they create a written plan for their future can only serve to discourage participation.

Public Act 123 of 2006 erred in requiring public and charter schools to compel students to create EDPs beginning in Grade 7. We should observe the great American principles of freedom and free markets in the healthful environment students enjoy in shared time partnerships, and apply that same principle in allowing each student's family to decide whether EDPs are useful to them and use them at their discretion.

My legislation simply removes this requirement.

As a technical matter, I note that EDPs are mandated by both the Revised School Code and the School Aid Act. This year's supplemental budget includes language that similarly amends the School Aid Act as my legislation amends the Revised School Code. My substitute amends the original bill to apply only to students in shared time partnerships; these are the only homeschooled students for whom EDPs are presently required.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before this committee and I look forward to any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Representative John Reilly