

Potential savings for PA taxpayers under HB 1013

by Mark Moore, CHAP Advisory Board Member

Present savings

Based on 2009-2010 school year statistics there are 21,240¹ homeschooled children who have a filed affidavit in PA. Based upon the current cost per student of \$14,675² that amounts to a total taxpayer savings of \$311,697,000 (\$312 million) in 2010. This is an annual savings each year to school districts and the Commonwealth since they have the same revenue with 21,240 less students who receive little³, if any benefits from their schools.

Lost savings under the current law

Our current law is the second most restrictive in the country⁴ and it has cost us in more ways than one. In 2013 there were about 54 million⁵ school age children in the United States. There are also a little over 2 million homeschooled children⁶ which makes home educated children about 4% of the U.S. student population. In PA there are 1.8 million⁷ students in K-12. Based on the national average of 4%, Pennsylvania should have about 72,000 home educated children, yet there are only a little over 21,000 (about 1.2%) as stated above. It would seem that the high requirements of the law have actually discouraged home education in the Commonwealth. As a direct result, this has defunded public education by 734 million dollars this year, not to mention the billions lost over the past decade or more. Additionally, while the rest of the nation is seeing a growth rate of 2% in home education⁸, Pennsylvania has been experiencing a 2% decrease⁹ for the past five years.

Potential savings under the new law

1.) Under HB1013 school districts would no longer need to collect, evaluate, and return the student portfolios. Along with this process is usually a written response or request for additional information and a letter when the portfolio is ready to be picked up. For practical purposes it would probably take the school district staff about an hour to review each student's work, plus

¹ Pennsylvania Partners for Children
(<http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/2693#detailed/2/any/false/824,750,466,465,464/214,389,390,391,182,215/9407>) and Pa Dept. of Education (<http://www.education.state.pa.us>)

² Openpagov.org (http://www.openpagov.org/education_revenue_and_expenses.asp)

³ Some home educated student may participate in public school sports.

⁴ Homeschool Legal Defense Association; (<http://www.hsllda.org/elert/archive/elertarchive.aspx?6867>)

⁵ Childstats.gov (<http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables/pop1.asp?popup=true>)

⁶ National Home Education Research Institute (nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html)

⁷ Openpagov.org (http://www.openpagov.org/education_revenue_and_expenses.asp)

⁸ National Home Education Research Institute (nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html)

⁹ Pennsylvania Dept. of Education
(http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/home_school_statistics/7428/ "home school education 2006-07.pdf")

additional time to write a short summary and other communication with the home educator. Roughly about 1 1/2 hours total. Using the 2009-2010 number of homeschooled students of 21,240 as presented above, that would be 31,860 total hours for all Pennsylvania school districts. The cost would amount to \$42.89 per hour¹⁰ based on the U.S. labor statistics for state and local government employees. That would be a total savings of \$1,366,475 (1.4 million) per year just by eliminating the unnecessary step of school district evaluations of portfolios.

2.) Additionally, by lowering our State's homeschool regulation to a more moderate level in line with most other states, as proposed under the new law, it would encourage more people to begin homeschooling their children. This in turn will bring up the percentage of home educated students to reflect the national average of 4%. Over the course of time, as stated above, can be an exponential taxpayer savings of 734 million dollars per year. But it doesn't stop there. When that point arrives, based on the national average of 2% annual homeschool growth¹¹ the Commonwealth should continue to see an additional 6 million dollars more each year to spend on public education since those homeschooled families would continue paying taxes without any benefit. This is a win-win situation for all Pennsylvania citizens. It allows homeschooling families more freedom to educate their own children, it frees taxpayers from extra assessment, and it gives school districts more money to use on less students.

In conclusion, HB 1013 if passed, could potentially add several billion dollars over the next decade to fund public education by producing more home educated students. It should also be noted, that from an investment stand point, home education yields better results. Public schools are annually leaving behind 22% to 25% of their students¹² in reading and math, not to mention the high drop out rate. Cyber schools are not much better. They take needed monies from the school districts with sometimes poorer results¹³. Yet by contrast, homeschooled students consistently excel 15 to 30 percentile points¹⁴ above public-schooled students on academic achievement tests.

¹⁰ United States Department of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>)

¹¹ National Home Education Research Institute (nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html)

¹² Openpagov.org (<http://www.openpagov.org/pssa.asp>)

¹³ Stanford University (http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/PA%20State%20Report_20110404_FINAL.pdf)
Winning Progressive (<http://www.winningprogressive.org/the-failed-cyber-charter-school-experiment>)

¹⁴ National Home Education Research Institute (nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html)