

Good morning!

I'm Dr. Bruce Eagleson. I've had the privilege of serving with the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) for more than 22 years. I'm currently chair of CHAP's Board of Directors. I count it a great privilege to testify before this body.

I heard a homeschooler interviewed on NPR's *All Things Considered* the other day. Nathan had written a computer program that he used to write sonnets in the style of William Shakespeare

(<http://www.npr.org/2014/02/10/274785962/wherefore-art-thou-robo-shakespeare-or-better-yet-how>).

Much to my delight not only was he a homeschooler, but one that I knew. I got to know Nathan when as a teenager he volunteered to work security for the CHAP convention. He attended Elizabethtown College, receiving a degree in English while working as a self-taught computer programmer. He received a Davies-Jackson Scholarship for a graduate degree at Cambridge University in England. He is currently a Harvard Berkman fellow, while also studying for his PhD at MIT.

Homeschoolers are doing remarkable things.

My wife Mary Ann and I began homeschooling in the early 1980s. At that time, each school district had its own rules on how to homeschool. It was my intent to move to a homeschool-friendly school district when it became time to register our oldest with the school. In 1987, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) was instrumental in having the policy of that time overturned as unconstitutionally vague. The legislature was under pressure to pass a new homeschool law. In time, it was passed and became the law that we currently homeschool under. Our family helped lobby for the passage of that law.

The 1988 law was one of the first homeschooling laws in the nation. As such, it was navigating uncharted waters. Many changes have occurred in the intervening 25 years. Many states have liberalized their laws, decreasing restrictions on homeschoolers as the years have gone by. We're here today to advocate some very simple changes in our law that will make the environment for homeschooling much better in the state of Pennsylvania.

These Changes will have the added advantage of taking some unfunded mandates off the backs of the public schools.

In 2001 CHAP was championing a bill to improve the homeschooling milieu, and one of your colleagues asked me "Do homeschoolers do better in the states with more regulation?" To help answer that question, Dr. Brian Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) and I did a research study. Because we wanted to minimize selection bias, we looked at SAT scores and compared them based on the amount of regulation each of the states had. The study showed that homeschooled students performed better than their public school colleagues, unrelated to how much regulation the states imposed upon them. Thus, public policy did not influence the outcome of homeschooling, at least in regard to SAT scores.

I'd like to talk for a few minutes about the goals of public policy in regard to education. The US Supreme Court has ruled that the state does have an interest in education. According to the court the state needs an educated populace to drive the economic engine of the country. It also needs an educated populace so that its people will not be on the welfare rolls. It should be noted that all the evidence available indicates that homeschoolers have higher academic achievement than public school students, and are less likely to receive welfare than public school students. Homeschoolers are meeting the state interest of an educated populace.

I would suggest that if regulation does not improve outcomes, and in regard to homeschooling there is no evidence that it does, then there would be no justification for increased regulation. I would encourage you to decrease unnecessary regulation today by passing HB 1013. Please give the school districts a break from doing unneeded busywork. Please give the homeschoolers a break from doing unneeded busywork.

Pennsylvania is widely considered to be the second hardest state in the nation in which to homeschool. Homeschoolers have told me that after looking at our law they decided not to move to Pennsylvania. This is your opportunity to make Pennsylvania a much more homeschool friendly state. You can do that, while decreasing the cost to the state of the regulation.