

Walkersville Christian Family Schools

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1983

God forbid that I should forsake the inheritance of my Fathers -- 1 Kings 21:3



Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Re: HB 1798

Dear Member of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Gary Cox. I am the superintendent of Walkersville Christian Family Schools, the bona fide educational program of Walkersville Christian Fellowship. WCFS has been overseeing the instruction of Maryland homeschooling families for over 35 years.

HB 1798 appears to be a reaction to the recent tragic events in California. I fully appreciate the desire of lawmakers to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of at-risk children. It is important that we take such measures carefully. I would respectfully point out that California's law in regards to home school oversight is significantly different than Maryland's. California allows a family to register as a private school, with no independent supervision of instruction. Existing Maryland regulation not only requires a family to register each child with the county board of education but also requires that each child's instruction be supervised by a lawful, independent public or private educational institution. Supervision includes face-to-face portfolio reviews at least twice a year.

Besides containing a serious violation of constitutional rights by mandating warrantless home visits, HB 1798 provides nothing that is not already a part of the existing regulations. Moreover, it appears that it would apply to home instruction families across the board, regardless if they are using a private educational institution for their home school oversight. Under present regulation, legitimate non-public educational institutions, as defined by Ed. 2-206, such as WCFS, have played a significant role in supervising the instruction of Maryland's children. Not only do we supervise instruction and maintain student records, we also report suspected child abuse and neglect as required by existing Family Law. Attached are forms used by our program as a part of discharging our legal obligations for supervising instruction and reporting suspected neglect and abuse. Dr. David Hornbeck, Superintendent of the Maryland State Department of Education in the early 1980's, modeled Maryland's home instruction regulations after our program, acknowledging that the department could not provide the level of supervision that we do.

Maryland can be proud of almost 35 years of meaningful supervision of nearly 800,000 home instructed students. The current regulations provide for independent oversight of every home instructed child in the constitutionally required *least intrusive manner possible*. HB 1798 will needlessly undermine this legacy by placing a greater burden on county boards of education and by jeopardizing the constitutional rights of law-abiding parents. For these reasons, I ask that you withdraw HB 1798.

Respectfully,

Gary L. Cox, Superintendent
Walkersville Christian Family Schools
(Attachments)

Superintendent
Gary L. Cox

Academic Supervisor
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