



House of Representatives

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Home Educators
FROM: Rep. Sam Rohrer, Rep. Joe Petrarca and Rep. Tom Armstrong
RE: Summary of H.B. 2560

H.B. 2560 and the need to update the Pennsylvania Home Education Law

The Pennsylvania Home Education Law still has the same fundamental problems that it was supposed to correct in 1988: arbitrary and discriminatory application by 501 different school districts. H.B. 2560 will also reduce burdensome and unnecessary record keeping requirements, lead Pennsylvania into the 21st century, and bring Pennsylvania's home education law into line with those of other states. Nationally, Pennsylvania has the reputation as one of the two states with the worst climates for home educators. Harassment of home educators by the school districts has reached an all-time high during the last two years, causing many families to decide not to move to Pennsylvania or to leave the state.

H.B. 2560 maintains high school diploma programs

Distance learning programs, diploma programs, and other diploma options will remain available to those home educators who would like oversight and transcript services. Under this bill, diplomas may be issued to students who meet the graduation requirements outlined in the bill. Regardless of the diploma option chosen, the graduate will be entitled to all the "rights, benefits, and privileges" of a high school graduate.

H.B. 2560 will allow home educators to have their students evaluated and tested

Home educators may continue to utilize these services to evaluate their students or their home education programs.

H.B. 2560 will provide greater protections for home educators and eliminate the need for the due process provisions found in the current law

With the removal of required evaluations and portfolios, the school district will no longer be required to assess home education programs. Furthermore, under this bill all Pennsylvania agencies, including Children & Youth Services, are prohibited from interfering with home education programs. With this higher level of protection the due process provisions in the current law become unnecessary.

H.B. 2560 will permit school districts to continue providing services to home educators who want them

This bill only prevents school districts from setting requirements for home education programs. Other policies and provisions regarding services offered to home educated students are left intact. Such policies may still permit involvement in other areas such as use of libraries, classes, etc. as long as the policies do not discriminate against home educated students.

H.B. 2560 contains less burdensome requirements and respects parental authority

Current law requires yearly notarized affidavits, objectives, logs, portfolios, periodic testing, and yearly evaluations by an evaluator and an unnecessary second review of these materials by the local school district. The requirements mandated by H.B. 2560 would be:

- 1) annual notification to the school district within 30 days of beginning a home education program and within 30 days of terminating a home education program,
- 2) provision of instruction for 180 days or 900 hours of for elementary (990 hours for secondary),
- 3) teaching of certain required subjects, and
- 4) fulfillment of graduation requirements.

H.B. 2560 will improve the quality of the home education experience in Pennsylvania

It has been shown that increased regulation does nothing to improve the quality of home education. When parents have more time to educate (instead of administrative record-keeping) and more funds available, it will improve the overall educational experience. Under this bill, assistance can be obtained during the year when it is most needed, not just at the end of the year when the home education program has concluded.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in 1999-2000, only 0.09% of home educated students went to a due process hearing. This percentage is lower than the drop-out rate for **any** school district in the state.

In addition, nationwide studies of home educated children show them to be scoring **above the national averages** on the SAT and ACT college entrance tests.

The requirements for home educators under this bill will ensure uniform implementation by the 501 school districts. With this uniformity, the threat of prosecution will be eliminated.

(Statistics provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Home School Legal Defense Association and the National Home Education Research Institute.)