

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Summary

As a mother of five, my eldest son's struggle to adapt to the traditional school environment led my husband and me to explore alternative educational paths. Opting for homeschooling in 2024, we witnessed a remarkable transformation in our son's attitude towards learning. Homeschooling allowed him to thrive academically, emotionally, and physically, fostering a positive environment tailored to his individual needs and interests. However, proposed changes to homeschooling legislation, including mandates to adhere to the national curriculum and justify our decision to homeschool, pose significant threats to parental autonomy and educational freedom.

In this argument, I advocate **against** these proposed changes, emphasizing the importance of preserving parental rights and the diverse approaches to education that homeschooling affords. This includes opposing the requirement for parents to prove that homeschooling is in the best interest of the child, as it undermines parental autonomy and individualized learning (Point 1). Furthermore, I argue against mandating adherence to the national curriculum, as it disregards diverse educational philosophies, inhibits individualized learning, compromises the quality of education, infringes upon parental rights, and imposes unnecessary burdens on homeschooling families (Points 2-5).

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My name is Wendy, and I am the proud mother of five wonderful children. Last year, my eldest embarked on his educational journey, attending prep with excitement and anticipation. However, despite not facing learning difficulties or bullying, he struggled to fit into the confines of the traditional school environment. Each day, eager to hear about his experiences, my husband and I would ask about his day, hoping for animated tales of adventure and learning. Instead, we were met with a disheartening response: "I don't want to talk about it."

Throughout the year, it became apparent that our son's enthusiasm for learning was waning, replaced by a negative attitude towards education. Hearing him utter phrases like "Ugh, I hate learning" was deeply disappointing and concerning. It was clear that his relationship with learning was becoming increasingly negative at such a tender age. Recognizing the need for change, my husband and I made the decision to explore alternative paths, ultimately choosing homeschooling as a brighter, more positive option for our energetic son.

As we embarked on our homeschooling journey in 2024, we haven't looked back once. Our son now relishes his mornings, eagerly engaging with his English and Maths materials and even developing a newfound enthusiasm for spelling tests. We've discovered that mornings are his prime learning time, as he eagerly dives into his studies upon waking. Reading together has become a cherished daily ritual, met with enthusiasm rather than resistance.

In addition to academic pursuits, homeschooling has allowed our son to flourish in other areas. He spends quality time with me and his younger siblings, learning valuable lessons in patience and empathy as the older brother. Physical activities like biking, scootering, and jiu-jitsu have become integral parts of his routine, fostering a sense of balance and well-being.

One of the most rewarding aspects of homeschooling is the insight it provides into our son's daily life. Gone are the days of uncertainty, where we were left in the dark about his experiences and challenges. Now, I am intimately involved in his education, knowing exactly what he knows and doesn't know, and being able to engage in meaningful discussions to deepen his understanding.

However, despite the profound positive impact homeschooling has had on our family, I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation. The prospect of being forced to adhere to a national curriculum and justify our decision to homeschool feels like an infringement on our parental rights and autonomy. Homeschooling has provided us with a unique opportunity to nurture our son's love for learning and provide him with a stable and secure upbringing. It would be disheartening to see these freedoms curtailed by unnecessary government intervention.

For this reason, I put forward my argument as to why I completely **oppose** the changes that are being proposed.

Homeschooling has been a cornerstone of educational choice for many families, allowing parents to tailor their child's education to their individual needs and beliefs. However, recent proposals by the state government to impose stricter regulations, particularly the requirement to "prove that the decision to homeschool is in the best interest of the child," are deeply concerning. This not only undermines parental autonomy but also encroaches upon fundamental freedoms guaranteed to families. Here's why such measures represent an overstep by the government and a breach of parental rights.

1. Parental Primacy:

The decision to homeschool a child is rooted in the fundamental belief that parents are best positioned to make choices regarding their child's education. Parents have unique insights into their child's learning style, strengths, and weaknesses, which enables them to craft an educational experience tailored to their child's needs. By imposing burdensome regulations that require parents to justify their decision, the government undermines this fundamental principle of parental primacy.

2. Diverse Educational Philosophies:

Homeschooling often arises from deeply held religious, philosophical, or cultural beliefs that may not align with mainstream educational approaches. Families choose homeschooling to instill specific values, provide a more personalized education, or protect their children from perceived negative influences in traditional school settings. Mandating government approval disregards the diversity of educational philosophies and imposes a one-size-fits-all approach that stifles parental freedom to educate their children in accordance with their beliefs.

3. Individualized Learning:

Homeschooling empowers parents to tailor education to the unique needs and interests of each child. This flexibility allows for individualized instruction, targeted support for learning challenges, and opportunities for accelerated learning. Government oversight risks imposing standardized criteria that fail to account for the individualized nature of homeschooling and may hinder children from reaching their full potential.

4. Privacy and Intrusion:

Requiring families to prove that homeschooling is in the best interest of the child introduces unwarranted government intrusion into private family matters. Parents should not be subjected to invasive scrutiny or forced to disclose personal information to justify their educational choices. Such requirements not only violate parental privacy but also erode trust between families and the government.

The proposed requirement for parents to prove that homeschooling is in the best interest of the child represents a significant overreach by the government and a violation of parental rights. Instead of burdening families with onerous regulations, policymakers should respect the autonomy of parents to make decisions in the best interest of their children. Preserving parental freedom in homeschooling is not just about education; it's about upholding the fundamental principles of liberty and parental rights that form the bedrock of our society.

I also strongly oppose the proposition that homeschoolers must follow the national curriculum. Homeschooling has long been cherished for its flexibility, allowing families to tailor education to the unique needs and values of their children. This proposed change threatens this freedom. While the national curriculum serves a purpose in traditional schools, its imposition on homeschooling families represents an unnecessary overreach of government power. Here's why forcing homeschoolers to follow the national curriculum is detrimental to educational autonomy and parental rights.

1. Diverse Educational Philosophies:

Homeschooling families often choose this path precisely because it offers freedom from the constraints of standardized education. They may have alternative educational philosophies, religious beliefs, or cultural values that inform their approach to learning. Mandating adherence to the national curriculum disregards this diversity and imposes a one-size-fits-all model that fails to accommodate the varied needs and aspirations of homeschooling families.

2. Individualized Learning:

One of the primary advantages of homeschooling is the ability to provide personalized, tailored education to each child. Families can adapt curriculum materials, teaching methods, and pacing to match the learning style and interests of their children. By imposing the national curriculum, the government stifles this individualized approach, hindering children's ability to learn at their own pace and pursue topics of particular interest or talent.

3. Quality of Education:

Contrary to the assumption that adherence to the national curriculum guarantees a higher quality of education, many homeschooling families achieve academic excellence through alternative curricula, specialized resources, and experiential learning opportunities. The

national curriculum may not adequately address the diverse learning needs or provide the depth of understanding that homeschooling families seek to impart. Mandating its use risks compromising the quality of education for homeschoolers rather than enhancing it.

4. Parental Rights and Responsibilities:

Parents have a fundamental right to direct the education and upbringing of their children, including the choice of educational materials and methods. Mandating adherence to the national curriculum infringes upon this parental right and undermines the authority of parents to make decisions in the best interest of their children. It erodes the partnership between parents and the state in education and diminishes the role of parents as primary educators and caregivers.

5. Burden on Homeschooling Families:

Forcing homeschooling families to adopt the national curriculum imposes an additional burden on already dedicated parents who have chosen to take responsibility for their children's education. It may require significant time, effort, and financial resources to comply with curriculum requirements, potentially detracting from the quality of homeschooling and imposing unnecessary stress on families.

Mandatory adoption of the national curriculum for homeschooling represents an unjustified intrusion into the educational autonomy of families and a violation of parental rights. Rather than imposing uniformity, policymakers should respect and support the diverse approaches to education that homeschooling families employ. Preserving educational freedom not only empowers families to provide the best possible education for their children but also upholds the fundamental principles of liberty and parental authority in education.

In conclusion, as a mother deeply invested in the education and well-being of my children, the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation raise significant concerns for me. Homeschooling has transformed our son's attitude towards learning, fostering a positive environment where he thrives academically, emotionally, and physically. Mandating adherence to a national curriculum and imposing unnecessary oversight threatens to undermine the very foundation of homeschooling: parental autonomy and individualized education. I urge policymakers to consider the diverse needs and experiences of homeschooling families and to preserve the freedom that has allowed us to provide the best possible education for our children.