



Vermont Home Education Network

Legislative ALERT - contact your local legislators

March 9, 2024

AOE is suggesting that the submission of the annual assessment be put back into the law.

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS to let them know you are not ok with this. This link is how you can find your local representatives: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/> Do a search for "legislators" by town.

Hello Homeschooler,

On March 1st I was at the State House. Then I got the flu. I am sorry this is so late. So, here is an update and PLEASE TAKE ACTION before March 12th.

These visits to the State House are always full of detail and it is hard to give you all the detail. I hope I have not left too much out to get you an idea of where we are.

I went to the State House on March 1st. At lunch time. To the Senate Ed committee room. I was able to talk with Sen Campion, chair of Senate Ed. The latest draft of misc ed bill S.167 section 8 has the hearings before and after enrollment in it. I suggested to only add the hearing process after an enrollment took place.

The AOE countered that the hearings be struck from S.167 and this sentence be added in its place to 166b (k) the Annual notice:

The notice shall include a copy of the record of assessment required by (a)(3) above.

You read that correctly, the AOE is suggesting parents must once again submit an annual assessment for each child.

I told Sen Campion that homeschoolers will not support that. He then included me on an email thread that he had with staff at the AOE so that I could "weigh in". I emailed the AOE and they have not responded to me at all. They ignored by comments. So, it is time for homeschoolers to communicate with their Legislators.

Let your local legislators know that:

1. You do not want the hearings before enrollment put back into the home study law.
2. You do not want submission of the assessment put back into the home study law.
3. That the new home study law was well thought out by the AOE and homeschoolers over the past 10 years. It was not hastily done.
4. Please leave the new law alone.

Keep emails as short as possible but make sure there are a few pertinent sentences in it. Ask to talk with them as you are constituents. And make sure the subject line of the email is clear as to what the issues are. Consider using words like homeschooling, constituent, and serious concern in the subject line. And please be polite, as I know you all will be!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. 166b the Home Study Statute was put into the law in 1987 and remained relatively unchanged until 2023 when the AOE submitted language that it wrote to reduce the paper work load on everyone. And stated it was in line with what many other states in the northeast are doing and that the new language gave them what they needed to oversee home study enrollments.
2. Homeschoolers and the Agency of Ed have been talking about this change for over 10 years and therefore homeschoolers supported the changes. This was NOT hastily done and hundreds of hours of conversation when into this action.
3. The language went all the way through the legislative process with no opposition and was passed by 180 legislators and signed by the Governor.
4. This past summer, a grandmother complained to Sen Hashim that her grandchildren were being “educationally neglected” and tried to get the AOE and DCF to do something about it. Both of which claimed there was nothing they could do as the law had changed.
5. DC testified and their only concern about educational neglect is whether the child is enrolled in a public, independent, or home study program. In Vermont learning is not mandated but attendance is. If the child is enrolled then there is no educational neglect per DCF testimony.
6. VHEN suggested that hearings AFTER enrollment could easily put back into the law as it is outside of the enrollment time line and could be used if needed to deal with a complaint such as this grandmother after an enrollment occurred.
7. The committee then put the entire old hearing process into the Misc. Ed bill. The problem with that is that hearings before enrollment are in a timeline of 45 days in the old statute and that time line no longer exist in the new law. Hearings before enrollment must be removed from the misc. ed bill.
8. The AOE’s concern has always been that they do not want a hearing process to deal with complaints at all. Instead of accepting hearings before or after enrollment in the misc. ed bill, the AOE countered with putting the submission of an assessment to the state back in to the statute.

This link is how you can find your local representatives:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/> Click on the search for “legislators” and search by town. You might get a personal cell number or personal email if you contact your town clerk. I am looking for a volume of homeschoolers to just contact their own legislators.

The Senate misc. ed bill as introduced is on the legislative website but the drafts are not. I am trying to get a digital copy for you to read for yourself.

Would you like to have a Zoom Call Monday evening, March 11th at 7 pm for me to explain in more detail? Let me know.

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