

1997-98 SESSION
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

Committee Name:

Senate Committee on
Education(SC-Ed)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01a
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➤ Appointments ... Appt

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➤ Hearing Records ... HR

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➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

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**Testimony on Senate Bill 106 before the Senate Education Committee
April 9, 1997**

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members,
My name is Joe King and we have been educating our four children at home for the past 19 years.

I strongly oppose SB 106 for two major reasons. First, SB 106 would change Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law. I do not want that law changed. Second, SB 106 would add one more law to the complicated body of truancy laws that are currently neither understood nor enforced.

First, I oppose SB 106 because it would change Wisconsin's homeschooling law. The homeschooling law has worked well for 13 years and should not be changed.

Wisconsin's homeschooling law is one of the best in the country because it holds parents accountable while it protects the state's interest in ensuring that its citizens do not grow up to be a burden on the state. As a homeschooler myself, I certainly don't want homeschools that are not working, that simply allow truants to escape the compulsory school attendance law. Wisconsin's homeschooling law prevents that from happening. Wisconsin's homeschooling law is working well. I remain grateful to the legislature which in 1983-84 passed Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling statute which continues to allow parents to educate their children in the manner most consistent with their beliefs without undue interference.

How do we know Wisconsin's homeschooling law is working?

First, there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence.

Most of you know at least one person, perhaps a friend, or maybe a relative, or a coworker, or a neighbor, who is homeschooling, for whom the homeschooling law is working. In addition, stories appear frequently in the media about families who are homeschooling, for whom the homeschooling law is working. And homeschooling has been going on for long enough that we are now hearing reports of homeschool graduates who have become responsible citizens and reliable members of the work force.

Second, during the past 12 years, several thousand homeschooled students have entered or re-entered conventional schools without problems; have graduated and enrolled in institutions of higher education and have entered the workplace and begun their careers.

I am not trying to say that homeschoolers are perfect. I am saying, however, that homeschooling has a remarkable track record.

Third, there is no credible evidence that homeschooling is not working.

Many people within public education interest groups have been searching for evidence that homeschooling is not working. Let me give you three specific examples of such searches.

First, the Legislative Council spent over \$100,000 on a five-month long study of homeschooling in 1990-91. That study failed to uncover evidence that the homeschooling law needs to be changed.

Second, Wisconsin's major teachers union, WEAC, attempting to influence the Legislative Council study, sent an urgent appeal for reports of homeschoolers having difficulty. The president of WEAC sent a memo dated August 8, 1990, to over 65,000 members of WEAC in which he wrote,

"It would be helpful if we could provide some examples of problems that we have seen with home schooling in Wisconsin. What is needed are concrete examples of students who had a home schooling experience and came back to the public schools with problems that we then had to correct. We are also looking for examples of students who are still in a home schooling situation and not receiving the educational services that every child should expect."

The memo goes on to say that WEAC would send this information on to legislators and the DPI to show that homeschoolers needed to be further regulated. However, the credible information that WEAC was seeking was not presented, because it couldn't be found.

Interestingly, the memo talks about homeschoolers "not receiving the educational services that every child should expect." Such language leads us as homeschoolers to surmise that some members of the educational establishment would use SB 106 to argue that the services which professionals and other special interest groups provide are essential and that all students should have these services. In addition to the language in the WEAC memo, both the National Education Association and WEAC have passed resolutions stating that homeschools should be subject to the same requirements as public schools. These resolutions were passed despite the fact that homeschools are in fact part of private education, not public education.

Third, the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators conducted a survey of school district administrators, again looking for problems with homeschooling. On March 19, 1990, Anthony J. Kujawa, Administrator of the Baraboo Public Schools, submitted a report on this survey. His disappointment in the fact that the survey did not uncover problems with homeschooling is evident in his comment in the summary of the study, namely, **"I hope that this document will have minimum circulation."** Mr. Kujawa refused to make a copy of the study available to the Legislative Council committee studying homeschooling, claiming that the study was a private document, possibly because the study did not conform to his bias.

There is positive evidence that homeschooling is working. Evidence that homeschooling is not working, has not been presented, despite the fact that several attempts have been made to find such evidence. The fact is that Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law is working and does not need to be changed and should not be changed.

When bills such as SB 106 are introduced (and, believe me, this is not the first time we homeschoolers have had to work hard to maintain the homeschooling law), homeschoolers are often asked, "But what are you afraid of? If you are doing a good job of homeschooling, you should not be worried about increased state authority over homeschools."

We are not afraid. We know we are doing a good job, doing what is right for our children. But we are tired of being harassed. Memos like the one I just quoted from the President of WEAC amount to harassment. They threaten to violate our privacy and our civil liberties. We have good reason to object to a law like SB 106 that would give school officials more methods to harass homeschoolers and more incentive to do so.

Consider another example of the educational establishment going after homeschools. In a letter dated June 19, 1990, former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Herbert Grover, wrote to an administrator, "I will use the information you have forwarded to me as I continue to do battle with those folks who think that home schooling is a satisfactory alternative to the public schools." It is that kind of thinking and that kind of language from public officials which makes us defensive. It is that kind of thinking and that kind of language which causes us to oppose attempts to give school officials more methods to go after homeschoolers. It is that kind of thinking and that kind of language which makes homeschoolers realize that we need to ensure that the homeschooling law is not changed.

The second reason I oppose SB 106 is because it would add one more law to the complicated body of truancy laws that are currently neither understood nor enforced.

The people who want a law like SB 106 do not understand the current truancy laws. You have already heard that existing laws allow judges to prevent habitual truants from homeschooling. Now let us look at indications of how well school officials understand the nature and extent of truancy problems and existing truancy laws.

First, some of you may have a copy of the testimony which was submitted to the Assembly Education Committee on March 10, 1997, for its special hearing on truancy that was held on March 25, 1997.

Included in this document is an article submitted by the Program Director of the Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression Program in Milwaukee. The article is titled "Trends and Issues 91: Education and Criminal Justice in Illinois—Truancy and Dropout" and it is from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. The article states, and I quote, "None of [the school] districts polled was able to provide information about how many chronic truants were receiving the various types of services in the Juvenile Court Act." It goes on to say, "Many of these school districts were unaware of the legal remedies open to them in pursuing truancy cases, such as prosecution of parents under the Illinois School Code." p. 78 Here is concrete evidence from an authoritative source that school officials in Illinois do not understand truancy laws. Do we have reason to think that school officials in Wisconsin are better informed? Let me give you an example from Wisconsin. Consider the testimony Marjorie Hilgart, the Dean of Attendance for the School District of Beloit, submitted for the same Assembly Education Committee truancy hearing. Ms. Hilgart demonstrates her lack of understanding of Wisconsin's truancy laws when she asks the Legislature to increase the penalties for parents for contributing to delinquency from \$50 dollars to several hundred dollars. Wisconsin law has for many years allowed for penalties of up to \$500 and/or 30 days in jail for contributing to the truancy of a child, including under municipal ordinances. (See *Wisconsin Legislative Council Staff Information Memorandum 97-1*, p. 25.)

In the same testimony Ms. Hilgart states that "We [in the Beloit School District] have gotten some bad press lately due to our high truancy and drop-out statistics. We have about a 9% truancy rate and a 5% drop-out rate." It's not clear from her testimony whether she is referring to Beloit High Schools or the entire school system. However, according to the DPI's report on habitual truancy for 1995-1996, the truancy rate for Beloit high school is 62% and for the entire school is 30%.

How can we make good decisions about truancy laws based on this kind of testimony?

The confusion of Ms. Hilgart and other public officials is understandable. (However, I don't think it is excusable, since it seriously impacts the lives of young people and their families.) Consider the fact that the brief summary of Wisconsin's truancy laws, compiled by Jane Henkel of the Wisconsin Legislative Council and published this February is 26 pages long.

Consider, too, the appalling lack of meaningful statistics. To be sure, the DPI report on habitual truancy contains precise numbers of truants by grade for every district in the state. But these statistics fail to provide any meaningful information on truancy. For starters, consider the fact that a "habitual truant" can be anyone from a young person who is basically on the right track and is going to grow up just fine but who has missed 5 days of school, or been late 5 days, for some reason to a young person who is in serious difficulty, is headed for more serious trouble, and is crying out for help by refusing to attend school. The DPI statistics give us no idea how many young people fall into which categories. We have no way of knowing from these statistics, or from any other statistics that I have been able to find, how many young people really need help and what kind of help they need. Nor is there any significant body of information about how many habitual truants are prosecuted, what penalties have been used, or what effect prosecution has had.

However, there is one set of statistics that I think has bearing on our discussion here today. Take a look at the comparison between the numbers of habitual truants and the numbers of homeschools in each CESA. We see that the CESA's which have the highest rates of habitual truancy have below average rates of homeschooling, while the CESA's which have lower rates of habitual truancy have higher rates of homeschooling. In other words, this statistical evidence does not support the idea that truants are escaping into homeschooling. If families of habitual truants were attempting to escape into homeschooling, CESA's which have high rates of habitual truancy would also have high rates of homeschooling. Yet the exact opposite is the case.

It does not make sense to pass more truancy laws.

But SB 106 is worse than a bill that makes no sense. SB 106 would damage homeschools that are an important part of Wisconsin's educational system, and it would eliminate an important option that solves truancy problems in some cases. I urge you to vote against SB 106 in committee. Thank you.

ANALYSIS OF THE 'TRUANT' DISTRICTS' HABITUAL TRUANCY STATISTICS' IMPACT ON STATEWIDE STATISTICS

CESA	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS			SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME
	PUBLIC	HAB TRU	HOME PRIVATE	HAB TRU	HOME PRIVATE	HAB TRU PRIVATE	
2	1022	332	12	32.5	1.2	0.0	LAKE GENEVA-GENOA CITY UHS
2	6923	2103	138	30.4	2.0	9.6	BELOIT
1	92612	26472	969	28.6	1.0	24.0	MILWAUKEE
9	877	162	9	18.5	1.0	0.0	LAKELAND UHS
9	443	79	31	17.8	7.0	7.7	ELCHO
8	1065	168	9	15.8	0.8	21.7	MENOMINEE INDIAN
12	780	121	22	15.5	2.8	2.1	HURLEY
12	2428	362	47	14.9	1.9	13.0	ASHLAND
12	396	58	24	14.6	6.1	6.1	MELLEN
2	10325	1480	242	14.3	2.3	13.7	JANESVILLE
1	3560	494	37	13.9	1.0	23.3	SOUTH MILWAUKEE
1	21767	2835	308	13.0	1.4	23.3	RACINE
5	6087	767	100	12.6	1.6	26.2	WISCONSIN RAPIDS
9	3160	384	178	12.2	5.6	14.5	ANTIGO
3	1808	219	122	12.1	6.7	14.2	RICHLAND
10	11370	1332	202	11.7	1.8	14.8	EAU CLAIRE AREA
6	7474	870	144	11.6	1.9	27.0	FOND DU LAC
8	1488	169	57	11.4	3.8	5.9	WITTENBERG-BIRNAMWOOD
11	1127	124	53	11.0	4.7	4.9	CUMBERLAND
5	8461	913	141	10.8	1.7	15.4	STEVENS POINT
8	1359	145	57	10.7	4.2	7.7	OCONTO
7	19408	1936	258	10.0	1.3	27.5	GREEN BAY AREA
2	880	87	11	9.9	1.3	0.0	WILMOT UHS
5	2552	244	54	9.6	2.1	7.5	WAUPACA
2	1412	133	14	9.4	1.0	0.0	EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY
3	825	71	7	8.6	0.8	29.3	CUBA CITY
2	2042	173	37	8.5	1.8	12.2	ELKHORN AREA
10	577	48	18	8.3	3.1	0.0	CORNELL
8	2945	229	64	7.8	2.2	14.8	MARINETTE
2	1225	91	33	7.4	2.7	0.0	PARKVIEW
12	5697	412	47	7.2	0.8	10.5	SUPERIOR
7	2396	166	21	6.9	0.9	26.0	SEYMOUR COMMUNITY
above 32	224491	43179	3466	19.2	1.5	20.5	ABOVE 32 DISTRICTS COMBINED
statewide	851914	57553	15632	6.8	1.8	17.5	ENTIRE STATE OF WISCONSIN
rest of state	627423	14374	12166	2.3	1.9	16.4	THE OTHER 395 DISTRICTS COMBINED

Mr. Chairperson and members of the Committee:

My name is Marty Deming and I am speaking in opposition to SB 106. I live in Madison and have 11 years experience as a homeschooler. I am here today to make the point that, **in light of the current definition of habitual truancy in Wisconsin, a policy that automatically prevents habitual truants from homeschooling is neither reasonable nor desirable.**

The term "habitual truant" is not a positive term. It evokes a response in people much like the term "hardened criminal." But what does this term really mean? According to the current definition in the Wisconsin statutes, habitual truant means a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for either of the following: (a) Part of all of five or more days out of 10 consecutive days on which school is held during a school semester. (b) Part or all of 10 or more days on which school is held during a school semester. [s. 118.16 (1) (a), Stats.] (See p. 7 of the Wisconsin Legislative Council Information Memorandum 97-1, "Compulsory School Attendance and Truancy Laws," dated February 27, 1997.)

Who defines what is an "acceptable excuse"? Under current law, every school board must establish a written attendance policy specifying the reasons for which pupils may be permitted to be absent from school [s. 118.16 (4) (a), Stats.] (See p.6 of Legislative Council Memorandum 97-1.) Thus, what is considered an "acceptable excuse" in one school district may be considered unacceptable in another. A student might therefore be a habitual truant in one school district for the same reason that would be an acceptable excuse for absence in another school district. In some communities, you are counted truant if you are 10 minutes late to class. If this happens ten or more times in a semester, you are habitually truant.

Think about it! "Habitual truants" could very easily be ordinary kids, like the kids in your neighborhood, like your relatives, maybe even like your own kids, or like you or your friends when you were in school. They could be kids who, sometimes for reasons we might find quite understandable, don't go to school or to class, sometimes only for a few days. Some might be absent without excuse because they are being teased and humiliated by classmates. Some might be so overwhelmed by their assignments that they have simply given up. Some might be home sick for longer than the school's allowed number of days' absence for illness. Some might not be able to find the motivation to try to learn things that seem irrelevant to their lives. Some

might be trying to figure out who they are and how they fit into the world. Some might be so far ahead of their classmates that they are hopelessly bored. Whatever the reason they are truant, most of them are not hardened criminals, they are not seasoned lawbreakers, they may not even be truant according the definition you or I would have of what constitutes an "acceptable excuse" for absence.

In talking about habitual truants in this way, I do not mean to belittle the serious problem of truancy. In 1995-96, according to statistics from the Department of Public Instruction, there were 57,553 habitual truants in Wisconsin. Imagine. Either some school districts are inflating the count of habitual truants by their unreasonable interpretations of truancy, or 57,000 young people find school so unengaging, so unconnected with the rest of their lives, so distressing, or so intolerable that they choose to risk getting into trouble with the law rather than simply going to class. Truancy is an indication that the school system, and indeed our whole society, is failing some of its young people. They are not connected to schools, schools are not meeting their needs to learn, and they are crying out for help. Such a problem cannot be solved simply by blaming or punishing the young people involved. This level of truancy is a clear sign that we need to do something different to meet some young people's educational needs.

Obviously young people are found to be truant for a wide variety of reasons. It seems only logical that there needs to be a wide variety of solutions to this problem. One solution that has worked for some young people who have had difficulty learning in conventional school settings, including some who had been habitual truants, is homeschooling.

It's no big mystery why homeschooling is a good solution to truancy problems for some young people. Homeschooling offers many advantages that conventional schools simply cannot provide, no matter how good they may be.

Homeschooling offers young people the opportunity to learn in many different ways, in their homes, in their communities, and in the world.

Homeschooling allows young people to learn at their own pace, going slowly over challenging material and moving more quickly over material that is easily mastered or that they have already learned.

Homeschooling offers one-on-one learning, widely recognized as one of the most effective ways to learn.

Homeschooling provides many opportunities for hands-on experience and learning from the real world, where a young person can see concrete results and make a real difference.

Homeschooling provides young people with many different adult role models as well as the opportunity to interact with people outside the narrow band of same-age classmates.

Homeschooling gives young people many opportunities to interact with people who know them well, who care about them, and who love them -- their families and members of their communities.

It is not surprising that homeschooling works in some situations where conventional schools don't.

This is not to say that all, or even many, habitual truants would start homeschooling. Probably very few would want to make the commitment or undertake the responsibility involved. But some would. And they should not be prevented from homeschooling just because they were truant, just because the conventional school system did not work for them.

When a family commits to homeschooling, the results benefit us all. Young people learn and grow. Their families become stonger. In the case of former "habitual truants," the schools no longer have to deal with young people whose needs they are not meeting. It saves the taxpayers money. And we all benefit ultimately when young people grow up to be contributing members of society. It does not make sense to refuse to allow habitual truants to even try an alternative that works so well for many, and may work well for them.

SB 106 has a certain emotional appeal because truancy is a problem that concerns many of us. But SB 106 offers no solutions to the complex problem of habitual truancy. It has no positive suggestions whatsoever. Instead, SB 106 would close the door on one of the few approaches to truancy that can work. Closing that door in the face of 57,000 young people, some of whom could turn their lives around through homeschooling, would cause far more serious harm than continuing to live with the potential risk that a few people might attempt to use homeschooling as a cover. Remember, it is currently already against the law to homeschool as a way to avoid the compulsory school attendance requirement. Judges currently have this and other legal tools to work with.

I urge you to vote against SB 106 in committee. By doing so you will not only allow some habitual truants a chance to turn their lives around through homeschooling. You will also maintain Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law, which has been working well for 13 years. Thank you.

Dear Chairman Potter,

I gave a slip to
speak - but I need
to leave soon. I
will be very brief. 😊
if you would like
me to speak.

I will plan to
write also.

Thank you.

✍️ Linda
Hansen

I will
leave at
1:40

DON

GROTHE

will not

be offering

testimony.

**Testimony on Senate Bill 106 Before the
Wisconsin Senate Education Committee
April 9, 1997**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Larry Kaseman, Executive Director of Wisconsin Parents Association, a state-wide grassroots homeschooling organization. I do not purport to speak for all homeschoolers. WPA provides information to the homeschooling community and encourages people to represent themselves.

Wisconsin Parents Association also works to inform the Legislature about homeschooling and related educational issues. We have distributed our quarterly newsletter to all legislators for 13 years, recently sending our 50th newsletter. Today we wish to make available to this committee our 4th edition of *Homeschooling In Wisconsin*. It contains a great deal of information that bears on the issues being discussed today and also serves as a reference book on homeschooling.

I am speaking in opposition to SB 106 for two reasons. **First, SB 106 would make truancy problems worse. Second, SB106 would change Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law and undermine Wisconsin's homeschools.**

Let's look first at truancy problems. Truancy is a very complex issue. Young people are truant for many different reasons. So, it follows that there is not one simple solution that will work in all, or even most, cases of truancy. More cases of truancy will be resolved for the benefit of all concerned if truants have several different options available to them.

At present there are a number of options that sometimes work. Alternative programs within the schools work for some truants. Enrolling in a technical school works for some. Homeschooling works for some. Because homeschooling works for some truants, if we are serious about trying to solve truancy problems, we should make sure that homeschooling is an option that is available to truants. However, SB 106 would prohibit habitual truants from homeschooling. This is one of the reasons I oppose SB 106. It eliminates an option that should be available to truants.

How do I know that homeschooling solves some habitual truancy problems? In my work as Executive Director of Wisconsin Parents Association, a state-wide grassroots homeschooling organization, I talk with many homeschoolers. To be sure, most families decide to homeschool because they want to provide their children with increased opportunities for learning. But a sizable minority begin homeschooling because conventional schools are not working for their children. Some of them have had truancy problems.

Remember that current Wisconsin statutes have a very broad definition of habitual truancy. A habitual truant is simply someone who is absent without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five days within 10 consecutive days or 10 out of 30. This means that many ordinary young people are labeled habitual truants by the statutes. SB 106 does make a reference to children who are in need of protection or services, perhaps implying that only habitual truants who are declared in need of protection or services would be prohibited from homeschooling. However, even limiting the prohibition in this way would not be acceptable, since there are so many different reasons that young people can be declared in need of protection or services.

Under SB 106 a lot of ordinary kids who are not "bad kids" would be denied the chance to homeschool. I'm confident that homeschooling would work for some of these young people. I know this because I have seen it work for many other young people in similar circumstances. Often, removing young people from intense peer pressure, allowing them to work at their own pace, giving them one-on-one attention enable them to learn much more effectively through homeschooling than they could learn in a conventional school. Homeschooling would not work for all habitual truants, but it is

important that it be available to those for whom it would work.

When homeschooling works, everyone benefits. Obviously the young people who are now learning benefit. Their families benefit. The schools no longer have to deal with these students' truancy problems. And because these young people are now on a better path, they will grow up able to responsible citizens and will not become a burden on society.

However, in preventing habitual truants and dropouts from homeschooling, SB 106 implies that truants should not be at home or with their families. This is a problem for me for three main reasons. First, many people, including many professionals, find that families in their homes often provide the best environment for correcting social problems. Second, the idea that truants or dropouts should not be homeschooled implies that parents and children are the principal, perhaps the only, reason for truancy. Third, it overlooks the track record of homeschooling.

It would be a big mistake to prevent people who are having truancy problems from solving these problems by homeschooling.

I understand that some people are concerned that habitual truants will escape to homeschooling, that they will claim they are homeschooling even though they have no intention of complying with the requirements of the homeschooling law.

I also am concerned about this issue. I have been concerned about it for more than 13 years. As a homeschooling father myself and as the Executive Director of a grassroots homeschooling organization, I have very strong incentive to work to ensure that homeschooling maintains the reputation that it has earned and deserves. I don't want homeschooling to become a hiding place for truants.

We began working on this problem in 1984, when we were working on Wisconsin's current homeschooling law. We homeschoolers realized that to win popular support, we needed a law that would hold parents accountable, a law that would protect the state's interest in seeing that children did not grow up to become a burden on the state. The law that was passed in 1984 holds parents accountable. Each year homeschooling parents are required to submit to the DPI a form that attests that we are in compliance with Wisconsin's homeschooling law and are not homeschooling in order to circumvent the compulsory school attendance law. The homeschooling law requires that homeschoolers meet the same requirements as other private schools.

Wisconsin's homeschooling law has worked well for 13 years. Evidence has not been presented that truants are escaping to homeschooling, despite the fact that school officials have been searching for such evidence. Instead, there is abundant evidence that homeschooling is working. It is working for many different kinds of families.

How can habitual truants be prevented from escaping into homeschooling?

First, Wisconsin's homeschooling law holds parents accountable, as I just explained.

Second, under existing law, judges have many options at their disposal when they are dealing with habitual truants. Judges can order habitual truants into alternative school programs, technical schools, non-sectarian private schools, etc. A young person who has been ordered into one of these programs has also been prevented from homeschooling.

Third, when other homeschoolers and I talk with people who have truancy problems, we do not immediately recommend homeschooling. We make sure that these people understand that they have a number of choices. They can write to the school board and insist that the public school provide a program for their children. In talking with these people, we stress that homeschooling is a serious commitment and a big responsibility. In this way we work to prevent truants from escaping to homeschooling.

I realize that despite these measures, there may still be a few people who do escape to homeschooling. However, these people can be prosecuted for not complying with the homeschooling law, including the subsection that states that homeschooling cannot be used to circumvent the compulsory school attendance law.

We need to remember an old legal maxim that states that "Hard cases make bad law." In other words, a law designed to take care of the worst possible hypothetical case is almost certain to be long, difficult to enforce, and more likely to prevent good people from doing good than bad people from doing bad. In the situation we are discussing, it is clear that attempts to prevent a few truants from escaping to homeschooling by passing SB 106 would indeed make bad law. The result would be a law that prevents people from homeschooling despite the fact that homeschooling would work for some of them.

Therefore, the first reason I oppose SB 106 is because it would make truancy problems worse by eliminating homeschooling as an option for some of the people who need it most and who could solve their truancy problems through homeschooling.

The second reason I am opposed to SB 106 is because of the ways in which it would affect homeschooling.

SB 106 would establish the principle that the state has the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool. By giving the state the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool, SB 106 would mean that homeschoolers would have to qualify to homeschool before we could submit our form PI-1206 to the Department of Public Instruction. Once the principle is established that the state has the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool, who knows what additional requirements it will impose on homeschoolers.

As homeschoolers, we have good reasons to be concerned about having school officials represent the state in determining who is eligible to homeschool. Some school officials are already working hard both to prevent families from beginning homeschooling and also to get current homeschoolers back into the public schools. These officials think that they lose over \$3,600 for every child who does not attend a public school. This \$3,600 is the average amount of money that school districts receive in state aids for each child enrolled in the district.

Districts are using a variety of approaches to get homeschoolers to enroll. Some districts have sent homeschoolers surveys asking, in effect, "What would it take to get you to enroll in a public school in the district?" Another district is studying the idea of classifying homeschoolers as "homebound students," the term the DPI uses for students who temporarily need to stay home, due to illness, injury, etc. and who are tutored at home by district teachers. This district is hoping it will then be able to collect state aids for the homebound homeschoolers the way it collects state aids for legitimate homebound students. Yet another school district discourages homeschooling by refusing to grant any credits toward graduation for time spent homeschooling unless students can pass final examinations for courses in subjects they studied while homeschooling.

It is not surprising that school officials are increasing their attempts to get homeschoolers to enter or re-enter public schools when one realizes that the average per pupil general state aid to school districts was \$2,676 in 1995-96 and increased to \$3,664 in 1996-97 as part of the property tax reform. This increase of nearly \$1,000 or 37% certainly gives school officials increased incentive to convince homeschoolers to attend public schools.

People often say to us, "What do homeschoolers who are complying with the law have to fear?" Unfortunately, as homeschoolers we realize that the political reality is not that simple. It is not enough to comply with the law. As homeschooler who comply with the law, we are used to being harassed by school officials. Before the current homeschooling law was passed in 1984, some homeschoolers applied to the DPI for permission to homeschool. The DPI was very arbitrary and unfair in the demands it made of homeschoolers. Since 1984, the major teachers union, the DPI, and the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators have all made concerted efforts to find problems with homeschoolers. In addition, many of us have received letters, questionnaires, and home visits from school officials demanding more information from us than the law authorized them to gather. One school official even went as far as

standing on a trash can to look into the windows of the home of a homeschooling family.

As homeschoolers we are not paranoid. We are in touch with reality. We have worked very hard for 13 years to maintain Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law. We are prepared to continue to work hard. That is why we are here today.

Since we have experienced this kind of pressure and harassment from school officials already, we do not have much confidence in the chances of our getting a fair hearing in a system that is controlled by powerful educational interests. We realize that in order to have public school officials declare us eligible to homeschool, we would need to convince them that our homeschools are very like conventional schools.

In addition, SB 106 is a violation of the very fundamental freedom of education which is essential to maintaining a free society. In essence, SB 106 is unconstitutional. The U. S. Constitution does not mention education. But the U. S. Supreme Court and lower courts have ruled that states do have the right to pass and enforce compulsory school attendance laws. These laws require that students attend an educational program, but they do not require that students become educated. This distinction between compulsory attendance and compulsory education is very important. We need to maintain this distinction if we want to preserve a free society. (See pp. 158-159 of *Homeschooling In Wisconsin* for more on this distinction.)

The courts have also ruled that parents have the right to choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs. Giving the state the right to determine who is eligible to homeschool violates this principle, because it gives the state the right to determine who is eligible for private education and in effect gives the state the right to determine where children attend school. This violates parents' right to choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs. We cannot maintain a free society without this important right to choose, without freedom of education. SB 106 sets a dangerous precedent of state interference in private education.

Conclusion:

There are two serious reasons for opposing SB 106. One is that it would eliminate one option for solving truancy problems, an option that works very well in some cases. The second reason is that it would threaten homeschooling. In addition, SB 106 is not necessary to prevent habitual truants from escaping to homeschooling. Existing law provides ways in which this can be effectively done. Therefore I strongly oppose the passage of a bill that is not necessary, especially since it would cause serious harm in two separate but important ways.

The citizens of Wisconsin need SB106 to be defeated so there is a better chance of solving truancy problems and so homeschooling remains a strong and vital part of the ways in which children in Wisconsin are educated. Judges do not need SB 106 to prevent habitual truants from escaping into homeschooling because existing laws allow judges to do this right now. I urge you vote against SB 106 in this committee. Thank you.



BILL MURAT

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • SEVENTY FIRST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Committee Members
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Representative Bill Murat

RE: **TESTIMONY - SENATE BILL 106**
Hearing - Wednesday, April 9, 1997; 9:30 A.M.
119 MLK, Joint Finance Room

DATE: April 9, 1997

Chairman Potter, and members of the Committee, my name is Representative Bill Murat and I would like to voice my support for Senate Bill 106 which relates to eligibility to attend a home-based private educational program.

Recently I met with Portage County Health & Human Services agency staff, and I was informed that enforcement of home schooling is a continuing problem. Some parents are not fulfilling their obligation to give their children an education of the same standards as public schooling.

By mandating school attendance for juveniles who have been convicted of being habitually truant Senate Bill 106 would prevent abuse of homeschooling by people who are misusing it to avoid their educational responsibilities.

Please support Senate Bill 106. Thank you.

James and Eva Bellinger
1018 Juniper St.
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
608-837-6471
April 9, 1997

Re: SB 106

Public educators recognize the tremendous need for parents' involvement in their children's education, and have been promoting and teaching individualized instruction to improve student achievement. Home schooling is one of the best ways to accomplish these goals.

Far from being a problem, home schooling is in fact an appropriate response to many of the problems that put students "at risk," such as poverty, single parent households, health of the student, violence in the classroom, etc. Home schooling parents provide the individualized instruction, one-on-one attention, reduced pressure from the worst aspects of the peer group, and parental involvement that students need. Home schoolers deserve the professional educators' and government's praise and support, not disdain and unnecessary scrutiny.

SB 106 is misconceived. Please withdraw it.

Thank you,

James & Eva Bellinger

James N. Bellinger
Eva K. Bellinger

Re: SB 106
Date: April 9, 1997
From: Holly Feig

As a home school mom, I am opposed to this bill as it amends 118.15 (4). I have the following concerns:

1. Although the intent of the bill is to apply to habitually truant students and dropouts, I feel it will give rise to the need to "prove" my students are not truant when we are out using resources in the community for our education program or en route to service projects. We regularly use the grocery store for math, geography, health and consumer education class projects. The students walk to the library, dental appointments and may be seen doing garbage pick up on our stretch of roadway or en route to the nursing home ministry, all during productive phy. ed. As we use the community for our education program, I am concerned that this bill would be misused to threaten the freedom we have to do so.
2. There already are truancy laws. This bill touches home schoolers. Home educators do not have a problem with habitually truant students or dropouts. We do not need it.
3. Former DPI state superintendent, Herbert Grover, once called home schooled children "the most abused children in the state." Home educators strongly disagree with that statement and it alerts you and me to the fact that not all educators think home education, although lawful, is a desired means of education. For this reason, too, I feel strongly that no other legislation should be introduced to give opportunity to other officials to make determinations about my legal home school.

I urge you to uphold the good home schooling law we have in Wisconsin and not pursue any laws or amendments that would change a word or the intent of it. If public schools need stiffer truancy laws, please exclude private and home schools from these laws.

Thank you for having this hearing and receiving my comments.

Respectfully submitted by:

Holly A. Feig
9082 Richfield Dr.
Marshfield, WI 54449

Text of speech unable to be delivered - page 1
Julie Shaul

Good morning, Senators and other friends of education. I, as a parent of a homeschooling highschool-aged child, strongly oppose passage of SB 106. What could be the useful purpose of this bill? It will not add to the ability of the state to make sure that children receive education. We already have laws that are capable of punishing truancy. Is the purpose of the bill to make a precedent in extending control over the educational freedoms granted to homeschoolers? If so, it is not based on a demonstrated social problem. It is not homeschoolers who generate massive public concern because they lack basic skills, can't get into college, and can't live productively and peacefully in the adult world. To begin controlling homeschooling would be to begin trying to fix something that isn't broken. Such control, assumed by those who don't understand or support homeschooling, would be a great danger to our ability to provide appropriate education for our children.

The concern that truants may become homeschoolers assumes that truants are all people who could never learn without being in school. But each truant is an individual child with an individual brain, nervous system, emotional response, history, and innate purpose in life.

Perhaps someone who stays away from school is extremely sensitive to noise and disturbance and finds it impossible to concentrate in crowded conditions, like one successful homeschooler we know.

Perhaps she is a person who by nature must learn experientially or while moving, like a friend who only learned mathematics when she was able to become a carpentry apprentice.

Perhaps his interests and approach to life are not reflected in school subjects, like someone I know who is still struggling through highschool with terrible grades, but is a natural mediator.

Or perhaps the person thinks in a very different manner from teachers and text-book writers and has been labeled dull, like Einstein.

Perhaps he has been victimized by bullies and finds school dangerous and emotionally intolerable, like my younger brother.

Or perhaps she is so self-directed and freedom-loving that school, even the best of schools, feels like a cage, like many inventors and people of genius.

Perhaps this one, singular truant has become frustrated by a learning problem, a racial problem, a social problem beyond the point of being able to learn in the school setting.

There may be many reasons that a person might find school intolerable, no matter how well the school suits most students. Is it appropriate to make sure that a person who, in desperation, becomes a truant can never make use of an alternative that might enable him or her to learn?

As you consider this bill, please consider how little it serves the State to unnecessarily limit the ability of its citizens to live, enjoy liberty, and pursue happiness. Save your legislators for supporting education, rather than restricting access to it. I ask you to oppose this unnecessary and harmful bill. Thank you.

page 2 of 8

3608 Gregg
Madison WI

233-7072

April 10, 1997

To The Senate Education Committee
Senator Calvin Potter, chair

My name is Nancy Horton and I reside on a working family farm in Ironsboro, Ohio County where we have been homeschooling our children for fifteen years. Having worked with both the current and previous laws I can testify to the workability of the law as it stands today; it is simple, reasonable and effective. The proposed amendment to 118.15(4) of the statutes is unnecessary and potentially harmful to homeschools. It sets a precedent of eligibility requirements mandated by the state that have never been and should never be imposed upon private education. This legislation is not going to solve truancy problems as, first, there simply are not large numbers of habitual truants flocking to homeschool and, second there is already a wide range of truancy laws in existence which affect all scholage children, including those who homeschool.

I have discussed this issue with a number of public school teachers and not one could see any need for such legislation. Each one felt truancy was an issue far more complex than this. Indeed, this legislation would close the one door that might just be the only door open to families and children

in need of help. It is impossible to judge beforehand how well homeschooling will work for any individual family; it has worked well in such a wide variety of situations.

I can't help but feel the intent of this bill is to weaken Wisconsin's homeschooling law and open it to even more restrictive amendments. It will then no longer be the real alternative that has thus far helped many families grow and learn together in a manner consistent with their life beliefs. In the fifteen years I have been involved with other parents and their decisions about education, it has become obvious that the decision to homeschool is a serious one and requires an enormous physical, emotional and monetary commitment. In such cases where public education is simply not working, it is essential for families to be able to pursue a real alternative that meets their needs, whether for six months or six years.

It is my understanding that the assembly is appointing a subcommittee to study this issue; it seems legislation would be more appropriate after this study; if indeed it was found to be necessary. I ask you, as members of this Education Committee to recommend this bill be withdrawn, as

it is unnecessary and seems to serve
no real purpose.

Thank-you
Marey J Horton
N23302 McCabe Lane
Etrick, WI 54627

Raymond H. + Elizabeth Fritsch
N17802 Gilmeister Rd
Galesville, WI 54630
608-582-2364

8 April 1997

RE: legislation - SB 106

During the 96-97' school year it became necessary to home school our son, Nathaniel Fritsch do to an illness.

We first tried to deal with the school - I'd get his assignments each day but there were several teachers that did not use books + would not copy lessons or instructions or find a book for Nate to use.

The school also refused to provide a tutor for Nate.

It became impossible to deal with the school under these circumstances and if it had not been for the reasonable Homeschooling laws of Wisconsin our son would have lost a year of school.

I am not a teacher - I am
not a college graduate -
this makes me neither qualified
or ~~not~~ unqualified.

I contacted the State Dept.
of Education & was horrified by
how I was treated because
it was necessary for me to
home school a sick child.
They totally refused to give me
any help or guidance as to
where to go or start. I
could not believe that our
State Dept. of Education did
not care about educating our
children.

Without News help & guidance
it would have taken me much longer
to put together ~~the~~ Nat's
Studies for the year.

Please do not make homeschooling
limited or difficult - there are
many situations out here where
we have no choice in the
matter because the public schools
will not work with us.

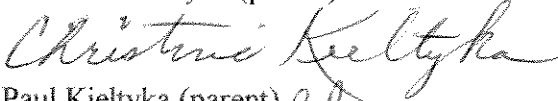
Sincerely,

Elizabeth Tutson

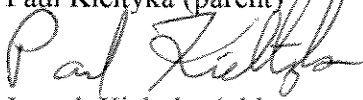
April 7, 1997

My family and I oppose legislation (SB 106) that would fundamentally change Wisconsin's Homeschooling law. My oldest son finished his schooling at home and attended Touch of Life Massage School in Minneapolis, where he did very well, and is now a massage therapist in the town of Galesville. My middle son decided to finish his last year in a public school; he is handling the load quite well. My youngest son is considerably ahead of the books for his grade level; he would probably be determined to be gifted by a public school. He wants to attend college and become an architect. Since it has already been proven that homeschoolers usually do very well in college, he will probably be able to realize his dream. From this brief history it seems evident that we have had experience, and success, with homeschooling and I am saddened that one of Wisconsin's most important educational assets, its homeschools, would be undermined by this proposed legislation. It is unnecessary and violates two fundamental principles of American jurisprudence; the first being that it is the parents' right to choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs and the second, that a person (group, etc.) is innocent until proven guilty. As homeschoolers we are unwilling to surrender our freedoms, rights, and responsibilities. We wish to maintain Wisconsin's current homeschooling law.

Christine Kieltyka (parent)



Paul Kieltyka (parent)



Joseph Kieltyka (oldest son and also a registered voter and concerned citizen)



April 9, 1997

Dear Senators:

On behalf of our homeschooled family, we would ask you to please reject SB106.

My husband and I considered homeschooling our children; however, we decided to send our son and daughter to school. Our public school experience was a positive one; however, at the end of that first school year, our son's kindergarten teacher recommended to us that we teach our children at home. She knew we were so very committed to their education and felt confident in our ability. I am so grateful to her for giving us that encouragement!

If anybody thinks that parents choose homeschooling because it is an easier way, they are seriously mistaken. Homeschooling takes real commitment by loving and devoted parents. My children have been given the option of attending school if they so choose; they choose homeschooling. They have been tested and scored extremely high in English and reading skills. They were average in math skills. We have begun to stress math, and we are using the Saxon math series. Frequently, we have to INSIST that the kids quit reading and go out and play! They love learning at all times; it isn't just an 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. event.

Our son is really into history and violin; our daughter is horse-crazy and owns three horses, attends 4H horse seminars, and plays the piano. Our children have canoed, caved, and mountain-climbed; they have visited art centers, the Wisconsin Senate gallery, and Native American cave dwellings in New Mexico, etc. We would be in Madison today, except we already had plans to go to the Natural History Museum in Minneapolis.

Homeschooling is a wonderful option for families, and we're so thankful to be able to do it for our children. Once again, we would ask you to oppose SB106.

Sincerely,



Chad & Lora Hill

Kathleen Plunkett-Black
N3528 Co. Rd. D
Arkansas, WI 54721

April 9, 1997

Education Committee Hearing on SB 106 (An Act to amend 118.15 (4); relating to eligibility to attend a home-based private educational program)

Thank you for holding this hearing and for providing the opportunity to share my thoughts concerning SB106.

I am opposed to this bill.

I live in Pepin County, and have been a homeschool parent for the past 12 years. We started homeschooling when my oldest son was kindergarten age, thinking we would do it for a few years; our decision to continue homeschooling through the older elementary and high-school years has been made one year at a time. Homeschooling has worked well for our family and our children continue to enjoy learning in this way.

I also serve as a regional contact person for a state-wide homeschooling organization. My name is "out there" as a resource for information about homeschooling in half-a dozen counties in West Central Wisconsin, and every once in a while I get a phone call from someone looking for information. The majority of these calls come from parents of preschoolers who are considering homeschooling as an option for their children for kindergarten or the early elementary grades.

I also get some calls from parents of older children who are considering homeschooling as an option. For many of these families, something has not been working in their child's public school experience. Sometimes these are children that are having a hard time fitting into the social scene, sometimes a child has a difficult relationship with a particular teacher. Some students have a learning style or special interests that just don't seem to fit into the particular educational structure in their school. The parents in these families are concerned and are wondering if homeschooling might be a way to meet their children's educational needs.

Occasionally, I get calls from parents of children whose difficulties in public school have gone a little farther. Some of these students may have developed a record of truancy.

I give all these families basic information about Wisconsin's homeschooling law and their responsibilities under that law. I offer to send them a list of books that might be helpful in deciding whether homeschooling will work for them and if so, to help get them started, or to help them identify ways to help their children learn well at home. At times I send the names of local homeschool support group contacts.

I am also able to tell parents of of students who have had difficulties in school that children who don't "fit in" at school often benefit from homeschooling because parents can individualize curriculum and instruction methods to fit the specific needs and interests of their children.

Some of these parents are at their wits' ends and are grateful to hear about an educational option that can allow their sons or daughters to regain an excitement in learning they have somehow lost, to pursue a special interest in greater depth, or just to learn in a more relaxed atmosphere at their own pace.

I hate to think of having to tell some of these parents that homeschooling is not an option for them, especially since these are sometimes the students who benefit the most from it.

I urge you to ~~withdraw~~^{oppose} this bill, to leave the homeschooling law that has worked well as it is, and to continue to allow all parents the opportunity to choose a method of education they see as hopeful and appropriate for their children.

Kathleen Bennett-Black

Fact Sheet: Reasons to Oppose Legislation (SB 106) That Would Fundamentally Change Wisconsin's Homeschooling Law

Wisconsin Senate Bill 106 (SB 106) would fundamentally change Wisconsin's homeschooling law by giving the state the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool. This bill is unnecessary, poorly timed, would not work, and would seriously undermine Wisconsin's homeschools by increasing the state's power and control over homeschools and decreasing homeschooling freedoms, rights, and responsibilities. SB 106 should be stopped as soon as possible.

This Fact Sheet is addressed both to members of the general public, including legislators, and to homeschoolers. Part I provides background information and the text of SB 106. Part II offers general reasons to oppose the bill. Part III explains in more detail how the bill would affect homeschoolers and why we oppose it so strongly. Suggestions for ways to oppose the bill are in Part IV, "What We Can Do." The most important first step is to call the Senators who introduced the bill and ask them to withdraw it.

Part I Background and Text of SB 106

Wisconsin has one of the most reasonable homeschooling laws in the nation. The current law protects both the rights and responsibilities of homeschooling families and the interests of the state. It holds homeschoolers accountable and requires that they meet the same criteria as other private schools. Homeschoolers who do not comply with the law may be prosecuted for truancy.

SB 106 reads as follows:

An Act to amend 118.15 (4) of the statutes; relating to: eligibility to attend a home-based private educational program.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. 118.15 (4) of the statutes is amended to read: 118.15 (4) Instruction in a home-based private educational program that meets all of the criteria under s. 118.165 (1) may be substituted for attendance at a public or private school unless the child has been found to be in need of protection or services under s. 938.13 (6) or (6m) or to have violated an ordinance enacted under s. 118.163 (2) or (2m).

Section 2. Initial applicability. (1) This act first applies to children found to be in need of protection or services or to have violated an ordinance under section 118.163 (2) or (2m) on the effective date of this subsection. (END)

Notes: The underlining indicates the words SB 106 would add to the current homeschooling law. S. 938.13 (6) or (6m) and 118.163 (2) or (2m) deal with truancy.

Part II General Reasons to Oppose SB106

• **SB 106 is unnecessary.** Wisconsin's current homeschooling law has worked well since 1984. Evidence has not been presented that truants are flocking to homeschooling and should be prevented from doing so. Under existing law, people who have been charged with truancy and who then begin homeschooling can still be prosecuted for those truancy charges. Homeschoolers who do not comply with the requirements of the homeschooling law can be prosecuted. In addition, there are already a wide range of truancy laws.

• **SB 106 would undermine one of Wisconsin's most important educational assets, its homeschools.**

Wisconsin needs a reasonable homeschooling law so families can find an educational alternative that works well for them. Some families choose public schools; others choose private schools, including homeschools. To function effectively as alternatives to conventional schools, private schools, including homeschools, need the flexibility to operate independently of the state educational bureaucracy. By giving the state the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool, SB 106 seriously threatens that independence. It does not make sense to undermine the thousands of homeschools that are working well in the hopes of keeping out a few families for whom homeschooling might not work well.

• **SB 106 sets a dangerous precedent of state control over private education.** See the preceding point.

• **SB 106 is poorly timed.** The Wisconsin Assembly is appointing a subcommittee to study truancy. It would make much more sense to wait for its findings than to pass yet one more truancy law.

• **SB 106 would not work.** Truancy is a complex problem that will not be solved or even mitigated by preventing truants from homeschooling. It is better to use existing laws that provide for schools to offer truants alternative programs and contracts with non-sectarian private schools. In addition, homeschooling often works for young people who have had difficulty learning in a conventional school setting.

• **SB 106 violates two fundamental principles of American jurisprudence.** The current homeschooling law is based on two principles. One is parents' right to choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs. The second is "innocent until proven guilty." If homeschoolers do not comply with the law, they can be charged with truancy and prosecuted. To give the state the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool would violate both these principles. It would give the state more authority than parents in determining how children should be educated and force us to ask whether children belong to the state.

(over)

Part III. Additional Information for Homeschoolers

Homeschoolers have extra incentive to oppose SB 106 because the bill would affect us most directly. Here are additional reasons we oppose SB 106. (Note: These points are necessarily brief presentations of sometimes complex ideas. For clearer, more detailed explanations, see "Special Bulletin for Homeschoolers, March, 1997," available from WPA.)

- **By giving the state the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool, SB 106 means that we would have to qualify to homeschool before we could submit our form PI-1206 to the DPI.** To be sure, few if any of our children have been found to be habitual truants, but once the principle is established that the state has the authority to determine eligibility, who knows what additional requirements it will impose on prospective homeschoolers.

- **As homeschoolers, we can be prosecuted for truancy if we fail to comply with the homeschooling law. Therefore, SB 106 could be used to prosecute current homeschoolers for truancy and thereby prevent us from continuing to homeschool.** In addition, new, harsher measures were enacted as part of the Juvenile Justice Code in 1995, despite the efforts of parents working through WPA to stop this legislation. This means that when families are prosecuted for truancy, judges are to preserve the unity of the family "whenever appropriate." (Earlier laws used the stronger phrase "whenever possible.") Social workers and judges are to use "most effective" measures. (Previous laws called for "least restrictive.") Parents of children who are charged with truancy can be ordered "to participate in mental health treatment, anger management, individual or family counseling or parent training and education." (For more information, see WPA Newsletter #45, April, 1995.)

- **We homeschoolers oppose this bill because it is clearly a bill directed against homeschooling.** It is not a reasonable attempt to solve truancy problems.

- **SB 106 would open Wisconsin's homeschooling law.** Note that the language from SB 106 would be put directly into the homeschooling law. Once a law is open in the legislature, it is much easier to change that law in a whole range of ways. We want to maintain Wisconsin's homeschooling law.

- **As homeschoolers we are unwilling to surrender our freedoms, rights and responsibilities** in a misguided attempt to supposedly keep out a few families for whom homeschooling might not work. In fact, many of us feel a moral obligation to help make the benefits of homeschooling available to other families, to support and assist others as we ourselves were supported when we began homeschooling. We realize that we face much more serious threats from the state's increasing its authority over homeschooling and families than we do from the possibility of a few families whose children have been truant not complying with the homeschooling law. We also realize that if we do not want others to judge us to see if we are qualified to homeschool, we cannot judge potential homeschoolers. In addition, we do not need a law to prevent large numbers of truants from turning to homeschooling. If this law is not passed, there will not be large numbers of truants beginning homeschooling.

Part IV. What We Can Do

- **Contact the two Senators who introduced SB 106,** Roger Breske (608-266-2509 or 715-454-6575 in his district) and Timothy Weeden (608-266-2253 or 608-362-7877 in his district), and ask them to withdraw the bill. It is very important that as many people call them as possible.

- **Contact our Representative in the Wisconsin Assembly and our State Senator or their aides.** Their names and phone numbers are available from the public library or the Legislative Hotline (800-362-9472). Share our concerns about SB 106. Ask them to refuse to cosponsor the bill (or to withdraw their names if they have already signed on), to vote against it, and to encourage their colleagues either to withdraw the bill or not to report it out of committee.

- **The Senate Education Committee has scheduled a hearing on SB 106 for Wednesday, April 9 at 9:30 AM** in the Joint Finance area behind the Senate Chamber on the first floor of the building at 119 Martin Luther King Blvd. (This building is near the capitol and is being used by the legislature during renovations on the capitol.) Plan now to attend to show our opposition to the bill. (People who attend hearings may testify for or against the bill under consideration or for information only. People who do not want to testify may still make their voices heard by registering either for or against the bill.) Important note: If SB 106 is withdrawn, the hearing on this bill will not be held. To find out whether the hearing is proceeding as scheduled, call the WPA Voice Mail at 608-283-3131 on April 7 or 8 for a recorded message with updated info.

- **Share this information with others.** Make copies of this Fact Sheet in its entirety (including WPA's letterhead) and give them to other homeschoolers, parents who are concerned about maintaining their rights, and others who might be interested.

- **Join homeschoolers and other parents who are working to maintain parental rights and responsibilities. Become a member of Wisconsin Parents Association.** Membership is \$20 per year and includes a subscription to the WPA Newsletter, special bulletins, and discounts on conferences and handbooks.

- **Purchase a copy of WPA's handbook, *Homeschooling in Wisconsin: At Home With Learning*** for more information about homeschooling and ways of maintaining our rights and responsibilities. To understand more about legislation, see especially pp. 90-103 and 151-214 of the handbook.

- **Attend WPA's 14th annual Home Education Conference** on Friday and Saturday, April 25-26 at the University Center of UW—Stevens Point. It includes 75 workshops for beginning and experienced homeschoolers; a vendor area with 70 vendors; and an excellent opportunity to meet other homeschoolers, find support, and renew your commitment to homeschooling. For a free conference registration packet, call 608-283-3131.

Wisconsin Parents Association (WPA) is a state-wide grassroots organization that has been working since 1984 to serve the needs of individual homeschoolers, to maintain the right of parents to choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs, and to counter challenges to Wisconsin's reasonable homeschooling law. People interested in homeschooling are welcome to join WPA.