

Testimony of Emmeline Beal
Against **LDs 1741, 1798, 1838, 1841, and 1860**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am Emmeline Beal of Cherryfield, and I am testifying in opposition to LDs 1741, 1798, 1838, 1841, and 1860. I am grateful that my parents home educated me for my entire childhood through my graduation in 2013. Since then, in addition to college-level studies and writing projects, I have tutored homeschooled students in various subjects, and in the future I hope to have and home educate children of my own.

Years ago I heard a message by a homeschooling mother about wisely stewarding the limited time entrusted to us each day. Though the message concerned scheduling, not school choice, the part that I best remember applies to both. The speaker exhorted other mothers to guard their families' time from myriad activities—even those suggested by well-meaning friends—that sounded appealing but would actually distract and detract from what the household was supposed to be accomplishing. She had her listeners practice a gracious but firm response: "Thank you, but no, that would just not be best for my family."

That is my response to the bills in question this afternoon. As for school choice, I absolutely agree that parents have the right and responsibility to decide where, how, and what their children should be taught. But I do not think that they should expect public funding for it.

As a Christian, I should not be forced to pay for my neighbors' children to be educated in atheism and other ideologies contrary to my beliefs. Likewise, my atheist neighbors should not be forced to subsidize my future children's Christian education, which would be contrary to *their* beliefs. Two wrongs don't make a right, and Thomas Jefferson wrote, "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical."¹

Though the sponsors of these bills may have good intentions and a real desire to help Maine families, I would posit that this is not the way to do it. Whether the proposal is called education savings accounts, empowerment scholarship accounts, hope accounts, educational opportunity accounts, school vouchers, or something else, the net result is more governmental control over education. If homeschoolers accept taxpayer funding, they are willingly submitting to increased oversight and restrictions that will likely tighten over time. Within only a few years the state could mandate what curricula we use, from what viewpoint we must teach, and what immunizations our children must receive in order to benefit from these accounts. Instead, we as homeschoolers want to remain free and privately funded, not become dependent on state dollars. Groups such as HSLDA Compassion² already exist to help homeschoolers who are struggling financially, and many individuals and families will gladly come alongside one another as well.

In Maine we are blessed with great homeschool freedom due to God's grace and to the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

I hope many other Mainers will join me in saying, "Thank you, but no, state funding of homeschooling would just not be best for our families." Please vote "Ought Not to Pass" on these bills. I appreciate your time and consideration.

1 from the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/virginia-statute-religious-freedom/>

2 <https://hsllda.org/community/grants-for-homeschooling>