



February 20, 2013

**Testimony of Audri Beugelsdijk Before the D.C. State Board of Education
Regarding Changes to the DCMR, Chapter 21,
Compulsory Education and School Attendance**

I have homeschooled my children for 8 years, three years of which have taken place within Washington, D.C. Currently, I serve as the Director for the Bolling Area Home Educators (BAHE), representing 95 families. I am here to serve as the collective voice of our members, some of whom have joined me today.

In reading through the proposed changes being considered within Chapter 21 of Title 5 of the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)*, we are concerned about verbiage which includes homeschools. Our primary concern involves the following section:

2101.1 Each educational institution operating in the District of Columbia, whether public, chartered, private, parochial, private instruction, or *home-schooled instruction* shall maintain an accurate, contemporaneous, and daily attendance record for each student enrolled in the educational institution.

Inclusion of “home-schooled instruction” contradicts the following section of the same chapter:

2100.3 A school-age child and his or her parents or guardians shall be exempt from the requirements of this chapter if the child:

- (a) Has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent; or
- (b) Participates in a home schooling program that complies with all District of Columbia laws and regulations.

Considering that Chapter 52 of Title 5 of the DCMR, entitled “District of Columbia Home Schooling” has already established specific procedural rules for home schooling for the District of Columbia, we fail to see why home-schooled instruction has been included in Chapter 21. The redundancy of regulation will lead to confusion on the part of families, as well as the OSSE, which exercises oversight of home-schools in D.C.

The DCSBOE has already established that home-schooling is not considered an educational institution, as evidenced by the following section:

2103.1 Each school-age child who resides in the District of Columbia shall attend a public, private, and/or parochial educational institution, or shall otherwise receive a thorough and regular education through private instruction or home schooling pursuant to rules established by OSSE.

The remainder of Chapter 21 specifically addresses educational institutions in regards to attendance records and reporting, absences, and truancy, with no mention of home-schools. In fact, the remaining sections specifically state, "Each educational institution shall. . ." The requirements go on to discuss team structures and responsibilities and collaborative services within the context of a traditional school environment, none of which exists in the home-schooling environment.

We feel that the proposed changes would inhibit the flexibility of homeschool parents, which is one great hallmark of this style of education. We urge the DCSBOE to remove all language referencing home-schools from Chapter 21, with the exception of section 2100.3. Considering the differences between traditional educational institutions and home-schools, we feel the needs of home-school families can best be addressed in the separate statute already in existence. The current approach is serving the needs of the DCSBOE and OSSE, while preserving and respecting the rights of homeschool families to tailor their children's educations.