

PENNSYLVANIA

HOME SCHOOLERS

Masthead
lettered by
Jacob Richman
(age 11)

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Lobbying Continues Against Lower School Age

from Howard Richman

The lobbying effort against HB 1695, the Pennsylvania bill that would lower the compulsory school age from 8 to 6, continues. The bill could be brought up for a vote in the House soon. Even if it passes the House, it could still be defeated in the Senate.

In issue #37 of the newsletter, I asked support groups to hold meetings with their state representatives and state senators to oppose it.

At their January support group meeting, Ingrid Wakeman, leader of the Easton Area homeschoolers support group, asked people to keep February 1st free. Then she arranged for a meeting room for 10 a.m. at the Easton Public Library, and called Rep. Freeman and Sen. Reibman to invite them to the meeting.

Once the time and place were set, she sent out notice through the Easton support group's phone chain telling people that the purposes were to discuss objections to the bill, and educate their Senator and Representative about homeschooling. Children were invited to play an instrument or tell about homeschooling.

Nineteen families showed up, about 60 people in all. Rep. Freeman

was fifteen minutes late. Sen. Reibman was unable to attend. A reporter from Twin County Cable television filmed the meeting.

The meeting opened with a children's program emceed by Kelly Wakeman (age 9). She spoke briefly about the different activities that her homeschool group has been involved in including swimming lessons, science fairs, international nights, and a homeschool girl scout troop. She was dressed in her girl scout uniform, as were the other girls in the troop.

Then Kelly introduced Jonathan Gahman (age 6) who performed the *Happy Farmer* on the violin and Jesse Stout (age 10) and Allison Stout (12) who spoke about the benefits of homeschooling and about some of their accomplishments. The children's program concluded when the Brownies sang a song.

Then Ingrid Wakeman spoke about House Bill 1695. She noted our two major objections to the bill: (1) it would take away parental freedom to decide when children were ready for formal instruction, and (2) the bill would burden homeschooling families with more expense and more work

with record keeping. Ingrid also mentioned that she had spoken with Dr. William J. Maloney, the Superintendent of the Easton Area School District, and that he said that he opposed the bill also, largely because of its cost. Also, Dr. Maloney had said that he had seen no evidence in Easton supporting the Department of Education's claim that dysfunctional families keep their children home from school until age 8.

After Ingrid's talk, Rep. Freeman was questioned about his position on the bill. He said that he was still concerned about dysfunctional families, but added that he would be interested in promoting an amendment to the bill which would meet homeschoolers' concerns. At the end of the meeting, Gene Wakeman asked him directly, "What is your vote? How are you going to vote on this?" He replied, "I've got to talk to some more people. I want to talk to some more educators, I want to read what you have given me."

Please call your support group leader and offer to help organize a meeting in your area. If you do, this bill will not pass. ●