



Dear Homeschool Community,

In Michigan, we currently have much freedom to choose homeschooling as a viable educational choice for our children, and homeschoolers are clearly protected under the law. This was not the case in the early days of the homeschool movement in our state, however! We have much to be thankful for when it comes to the protection and freedoms we enjoy under our current Michigan School Code. This school code was amended in our favor back in 1994. That amendment came after homeschool parents and leaders worked tirelessly with the current legislators of the time. But like any law, it could change at any time.

The right to homeschool here in Michigan was earned by homeschooling families like yours, educating their legislators about the value and benefits of homeschooling. The right to continue to homeschool freely here in Michigan must also be earned by homeschooling families like yours, doing what the homeschoolers pioneers did: building bridges with our legislators.

Let me encourage you to have as one of the goals for your homeschooling family this year-making time to reach out to your legislators. By doing so, you will build bridges and tear down barriers. You will help create a positive relationship between the homeschool community and our legislature! By establishing a relationship, you will earn their confidence and be given the opportunity to converse with them about issues that are important to you, despite their political persuasion. Here are a few simple, tried and true things you can do to build a relationship and earn the confidence of your legislators- regardless of their political party!

1. **Write a letter introducing yourself and your family.** In the letter thank them for all their hard work and service to the people of Michigan. Tell them you are praying for them, ask them if they have any specific prayer requests they would like to share with you - be it work or family related. If they share a request - **be sure to pray, then follow up** with a 'Thinking of You Note' and see how they are doing.

2. **Visit them in their local district office or in Lansing.** Many legislators set aside certain times in their districts to meet with their constituents. Consider blessing them by taking a delicious treat with you or leaving a small gift like special "made in Michigan" food or decorative item.
3. **Send cards of encouragement throughout the year.** Birthdays (usually posted on their website), 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are all great opportunities to thank them for their service. Consider including a family picture and hand-drawn pictures or notes from your children to make it more personal.
4. **Invite them to homeschooling events in your area** -- picnics, programs, graduations, concerts, etc.
5. **Consider volunteering in their office or on their campaign.** If you have confidence in what they stand for, offer your time to help: Homeschoolers can assist with mailings, phone calls, placing yard signs, distributing literature door-to-door, marching in local parades, etc.

Don't wait to contact them until you have a complaint or a problem. Be pro-active. Then when threatening legislation comes along, you can reach out to them and already have an established relationship. Be sure to always communicate kindly. If by phone, do not argue or raise your voice with them or their staff member - even when you don't agree. Thank them for taking your call. By letter/email, the same - kindly share your thoughts and opinions and thank them for their service.

God has blessed the homeschoolers in Michigan because of the relationship-building that has gone on for many years between homeschooling families and our legislators. We have been privileged to have firewalls in both the House and Senate Education Committees, men and women who have stood strong for our homeschooling freedoms, because they know us and trust us! But when it comes to floor votes, or even bills being discussed in a committee, all legislators involved have a say. That is when the personal relationship you have established with your legislator will play a very important role in how they vote! This is when democracy works -- as the will of the people is to be represented! This is when your hard work in building that relationship will bear fruit!

Building bridges, not barriers, will be a blessing not only for you and your family, but the hundreds of other homeschool families across the state. When discussions about homeschooling come up in Lansing and legislation is written and voted on, your legislator will have a homeschool family come to mind whom he or she knows and has confidence in, making his or her vote personal and with purpose, because they have a relationship with you.

God bless your homeschool family during these unprecedented times in which we're living! May you be a blessing to your legislators and other government leaders this year.

Building a Stronger Homeschool Community Together,
Patti Sailor

***Kelly and Patti Sailor (Jackson, MI) completed their family's 30 year homeschool journey in 2019, graduating their fifth and youngest child. The Sailors continue to serve in the homeschool community in their local support group co-op, as well as on MiCHN's Board of Directors as legislative liaisons, working with Michigan legislators and citizen groups to maintain our right to homeschool in Michigan.*

Day Under the Dome... Building Bridges Not Barriers