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Dear members of the House Education Policy Administration Committee,

I am writing as parent, and as a part of the homeschooling and private school community to express significant concern regarding proposed mandates in HB 1578. I am writing not as a skilled policy expert but as a parent – one who has spent last decade advocating, explaining, and sometimes fighting for a child who learns differently. Families like mine choose homeschooling and private education because our children need environments where they are seen for who they are not reduced to labels, diagnosis or data points. That is why the recent proposed mandates in HB 1578 requiring public disclosure of sensitive student and family information have troubled me deeply.

Families who choose home schooling or private education often do so because their children require individualized instruction, specialized supports, or learning environments that protect their dignity and well-being. When you have a child with special education needs you learn quickly that their personal information is not just “data.” It is the story of their struggles, their vulnerabilities, their medical histories, their hardest days and the private details of family life that we share only because we want them to receive the support they deserve. These are not things we ever imagined would be placed in a public arena. The system we already navigate – medical, therapeutic, educational, evaluative -are already exhausting enough without adding another layer of exposure and fear.

Such disclosures are made in good faith with the understanding that this information will remain confidential and used solely to support the child’s education progress. Mandates that broaden public access to this data whether directly or through reporting requirements that make the students identifiable - risk violating that trust.

My concerns are straightforward.

- **Risk of stigma and discrimination:** Public accessible information about disabilities, learning differences or behavioral challenges can expose children to misunderstanding, labeling, or long-term harm.
- **Safety and vulnerability:** Many students receiving special education services are already at higher risk of bullying or exploitation. Public disclosure of personal details increases that vulnerability.

- **Family privacy:** Home schooling and private school families often share sensitive information about medical needs, mental health or home life as part of evaluations or accommodations this information should never become part of a public record.
- **Equity concerns:** families who rely on specialized private programs or individualized home education plans should not be penalized or exposed simply because they have chosen a different educational path for their child.
- **Legal and ethical conflicts:** Expanded disclosure requirements may conflict with existing privacy protection and place undue burdens on private schools, evaluators and homeschooling families.

I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider any mandate that compromises the confidentiality of student information, particularly those with special education needs.

Homeschooling and private school families are not trying to avoid accountability. We are trying to protect our children from harm – emotional, social and sometimes physical. Privacy is not a luxury for our kids, it’s a safeguard that allows them to learn, grow and heal without the weight of public scrutiny. Families who educate outside the public system are allies in the broader educational landscape; we should not be penalized for utilizing a valuable tool like the EFA. Many of these families have already walked along exhausting roads to find the right educational fit, me included. I ask that you safeguard the dignity, safety and privacy of our children as you evaluate these proposals.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to supporting all students in our state.

Christina Emery