

BUILDING A CASE

FOR ACCOUNTABILITY





A GROWING INTEREST IN REFORM

FIVE STATES INTRODUCE LEGISLATION

A NOTE FROM RACHEL COLEMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, legislators in five states introduced bills to protect homeschooled children. In our five-year history as an organization, we have never seen this level of interest in homeschool reform, and we voiced our support at every step of the way—reviewing draft legislation in Hawaii, advocating for legislation in Kentucky and New Hampshire, and showing up to legislative hearings in California. Unfortunately, however, none of these bills passed.

I've spent a lot of time this year thinking about why homeschool reform bills fail -- and how to change this.

LEGISLATORS NEED DATA TO BUILD A STRONGER CASE FOR THE PUBLIC.

Each time a homeschool abuse case floods (and then falls from) the headlines, opponents of reform claim that these cases are rare. They say there is no evidence that there is a widespread problem. They point to studies they say show that homeschooled children perform well above average. No need for change, they say. Everything is already fine.

Researchers, policy-makers, and agencies have been slow to recognize the need for data. But that's changing, thanks to homeschool alumni who are sharing their stories and advocating for scrutiny.

AT THE END OF 2018, WE HAVE MORE DATA THAN EVER BEFORE.

A study in Connecticut found that over a third of children removed from school to be homeschooled were children previously known to child welfare authorities. CRHE's analysis of testing data from Alaska reveals that homeschooled students score no better than the public school average, despite being more likely to be white and affluent, factors usually associated with higher performance.

As we enter a new year, I'm hopeful that these studies -- and others like them -- may help turn the tide. We've passed the first hurdle -- more legislators are seeing the need for reform. It's time to address the second hurdle -- building a case for the public so that we can get these bills passed.





SPEAKING UP AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS

CALIFORNIA MAKES A MOVE TOWARD CHANGE

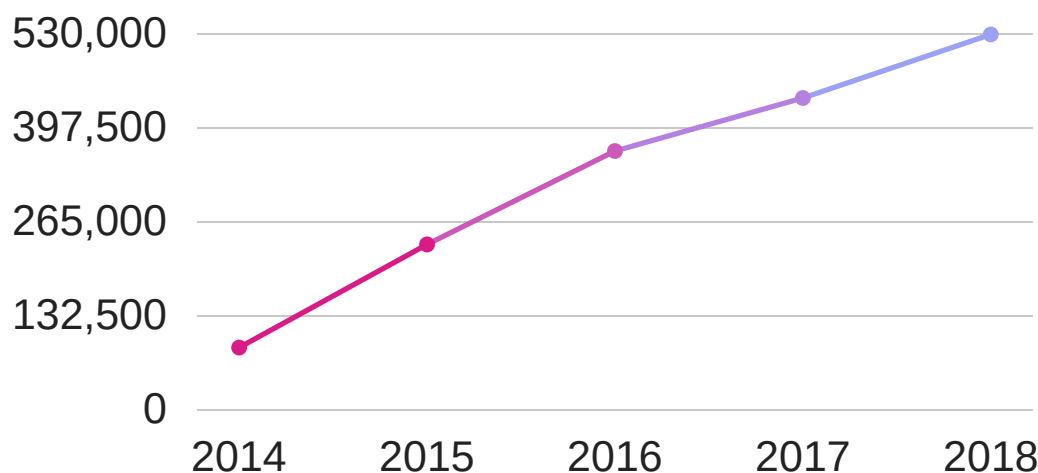
In January 2018, a teenager escaped her family's California home and called the police. Authorities found her 12 siblings still in the home, severely malnourished, some of them chained to furniture. The Turpin children's story quickly hit international news -- from CNN to People magazine -- as people across the world read a heartbreaking story of torture, malnutrition, and severe abuse. Despite their parents having a legally registered homeschool, the children had zero contact with mandatory reporters or outside adults who might have noticed their suffering and intervened. Public anger and shock was palpable.

THESE ARE CRITICAL OPPORTUNITIES--WHEN HOMESCHOOL POLICY IS NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT AND LEGISLATORS TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT ANOTHER TRAGEDY.

When the Turpin story broke, our staff and volunteers took calls from numerous reporters and appeared in dozens of media stories, including Reuters, CNN, and an AP story reprinted 100 times nationwide. Our executive director, Dr. Rachel Coleman, went on ABC's 20/20, offering analysis on homeschool law and sharing our policy recommendations. As media attention intensified, Dr. Coleman and Kathryn Brightbill, a CRHE board member, published an op-ed calling for reform in the LA Times.

In the midst of this publicity, Kiernyn Darkwater, CRHE's tech director, began organizing other reform-minded homeschool alumni in California. Kiernyn marshalled these individuals into a California chapter of CRHE, met with lawmakers, and spoke at legislative hearings. Theirs were some of the only voices speaking up for homeschool alumni and children in a heated policy debate. These local networks and relationships are crucial. When the opposition is loud, legislators need to hear from constituents who want to make homeschooling safe.

WEBSITE VIEWS OF RESPONSIBLEHOMESCHOOLING.ORG





STUDYING HOMESCHOOL OUTCOMES

A DEEP DIVE INTO HOMESCHOOL TEST SCORES

In November 2018, Dr. Chelsea McCracken, CRHE's senior research analyst, completed her analysis of testing data from Alaska. Most states do not require homeschooled children to be tested; as a result, studies of homeschooled students' academic performance tend to use volunteer participants, oversampling high performers. Critics of homeschool reform frequently point to these lopsided studies to claim that no oversight of homeschooling is needed. This is why Dr. McCracken's study is so important:

THE STUDY CIRCUMVENTS MANY OF THE CHALLENGES OTHER STUDIES FACE AND PROMISES TO SHAKE UP WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HOMESCHOOL ACADEMICS.

The majority of Alaska's homeschooled students are enrolled in district-run programs which offer parents around \$2000 per child for education expenses while allowing parents to design their children's curriculum, choose their own pedagogy, and homeschool independently. The first of these programs was created in 1997 by homeschooling parents, and was designed to cater to homeschooling families. Because state money is involved, students enrolled in these programs are tested annually in grades 3 through 10, and this data is released by the state.

Dr. McCracken examined 12 years of data from 38 home study programs, reviewing an average of 10,800 homeschooled students' test scores per year. She was also able to break scores down along gender, race, and class lines, allowing for analysis that has never before been conducted. Dr. McCracken's results showed that there was no overall difference between the scores of traditional public school students and homeschooled students enrolled in the state's correspondence programs, despite the homeschooled students being more likely to be white and affluent than other students.

Dr. McCracken found that homeschooled students who were white, non-disabled, and not economically disadvantaged scored lower than their counterparts in traditional public schools, while homeschooling was correlated with higher scores for children of color, children with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged children relative to their traditional public school counterparts -- except in math, where the homeschooled students scored lower than their traditional public school counterparts in nearly every demographic category.

Dr. McCracken's study was co-authored with Dr. Coleman, who wrote a major section on the history of homeschooling in Alaska. Funded by generous donations from our supporters, the study demonstrates a need for robust efforts to ensure that homeschooled students have access to the educational opportunities and support they need to thrive.

12 YEARS
OF DATA



10,800

HOMESCHOOL TEST
SCORES PER YEAR





KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

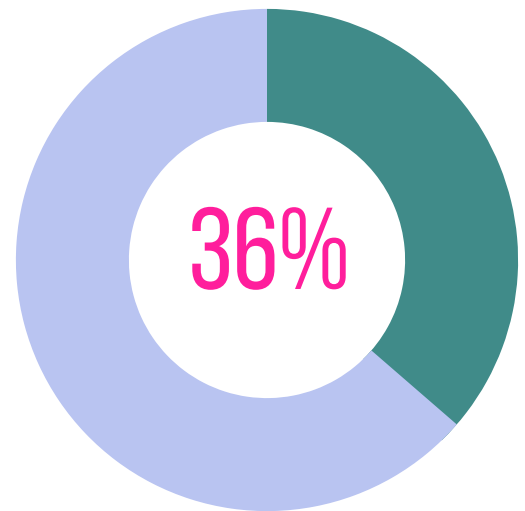
DATA ON HOMESCHOOLING & ABUSE REPORTS

In April 2018, Sarah Eagan, the Child Advocate of Connecticut, published a rigorously researched report that revealed 36% of Connecticut families that removed children from school to be homeschooled had been subject to previous child abuse or neglect reports. Eagan's office, a state agency tasked with monitoring and evaluating child protection in Connecticut, obtained records from six school districts. They cross-referenced the list of students withdrawn to be homeschooled during a three-year period with child welfare records to find the number of reports and their resolution. Eagan found that the vast majority of these cases involved either multiple or founded (substantiated) past reports.

Bills designed to protect at-risk children are generally introduced after a tragic case of child torture in a homeschool setting comes to light. These bills often fail because critics portray them as isolated cases and argue that there is no data that links homeschooling and child abuse.

THIS REPORT DIRECTLY COUNTERS CLAIMS THAT FEW PARENTS USE HOMESCHOOLING AS A SHIELD FOR ABUSE.

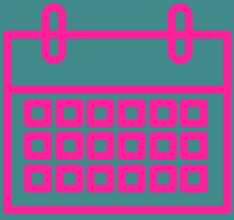
In fact, Eagan's findings suggest that this problem may be more common than even we realized. After Eagan released her report, CRHE spoke with her office and published a press release highlighting the report's findings. Since then, we've pointed lawmakers in numerous other states to Eagan's report, and have urged policymakers and child welfare officials in those states to initiate similar studies. Through our advocacy, networking, and awareness raising, we are working to make Eagan's study a template rather than a footnote.



of families that removed children from school to be homeschooled had been subject to previous child abuse or neglect reports.

THIS FINDING BACKS UP
CONCERNS WE HAVE
VOICED ABOUT LAX
HOMESCHOOL LAWS
FOR YEARS NOW.

- CRHE Media Release, May 2018



2018 AT A GLANCE

CRHE BY THE NUMBERS

156 MEDIA
MENTIONS



13 PRESS
RELEASES



75 REQUESTS
FOR HELP



OUR MISSION

TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE NEED
FOR HOMESCHOOLING REFORM,
PROVIDE PUBLIC POLICY GUIDANCE,
AND ADVOCATE FOR RESPONSIBLE
HOME EDUCATION PRACTICES.

29 NEW ABUSE CASES RECORDED
AT [HSINVISIBLECHILDREN.ORG](https://hsinvisiblechildren.org)

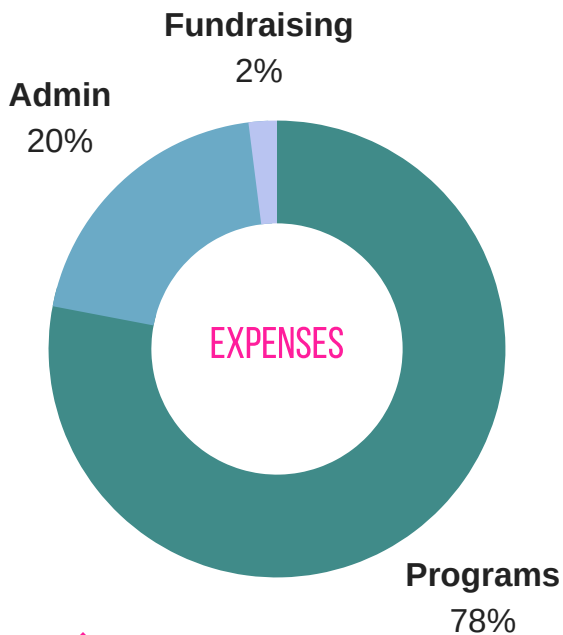
42 TESTIMONIALS & SIGNATURES ON
RESPONSIBLEHOMESCHOOLING.ORG





REVENUE AND EXPENSES

FISCAL YEAR 2017 TO 2018



PROGRAM EXPENSES

- 49% Conducting research
- 35% Raising awareness
- 8% Providing policy guidance
- 8% Creating resources and providing support

TOTAL EXPENSES \$13,200

TOTAL REVENUE \$11,788

Fiscal Year 2017-2018 July 1 to June 30

CRHE used surplus revenue from the previous fiscal year to fund research costs. Program costs are low because our staff continues to donate several thousand of volunteer hours each year.

