

Statement of Kim Kendall

Good Morning. My name is Kim Kendall; I'm a wife and a mother with two children in the public school system in St. Johns County. I am a full-time homemaker and was formerly an air traffic controller for ten years.

Three months ago, I received an e-mail from a friend about science standards being evaluated in Florida including the dogmatic assumption "Evolution is the fundamental concept underlying all of biology and is supported by multiple forms of scientific evidence."

While I applaud the Department of Education for their efforts to upgrade the math and science standards in Florida, their approach to the biological sciences is simply unacceptable to me as parent. My children are both in public schools and I want them to have a well-rounded education, and to be exposed to the most current and up-to-date scientific evidence.

I was very concerned about this issue and decided to do something about it. I then began contacting most of the people you see standing behind me here today. All I wanted to do is have my voice be heard by the actual people making the decisions in this matter.

I have devoted weeks and weeks to just trying to be heard but I have been met with nothing but frustration and disappointment. There have been public hearings that were abruptly canceled; there were no press releases issued for the hearings that were scheduled—or for the canceled hearings, the computerized survey for public comment was just too complicated and difficult to navigate for even a sophisticated user like myself. The multiple attempts by all of us to meet personally with members of the Board of Education have been totally unanswered.

I even met personally with the Florida Times Union Education reporter Deidre Connor, about why the newspaper was not covering this issue and she was totally unaware of it. She received no press release about a Jacksonville public hearing on this topic and was surprised to learn it was even taking place in the very city for which she is responsible for covering. I have also seen first hand two members of the Framers and Writers committee strong arm and force the other ten members into their minority viewpoint.

And finally, after extensive efforts, I was promised by the Chairman of the State Board of Education, Willard Fair, and confirmed by the Education Commissioner's Office, that I was added to the December SBOE meeting agenda to speak for 3 minutes. At 9 pm, the night before the meeting, I was called by the Education Commissioner, Eric Smith, who told me that I now would NOT be able to speak.

I, along with three other parents, still attended the December meeting – since it IS open to the public – to at least present our packets of information that included the problems with the issues of public notice and how the process was being handled. Both Chairman Fair and Commissioner Smith, at this meeting, made a second promise to me that I would be able to speak at the meeting on February 19th, in Tallahassee, when the final vote will take place on this subject.

And now Thursday of last week, I learned from a memo by Kristina Luna of the DOE, that there would be no testimony at the February 19th meeting, in front of the actual decision makers. Instead, this hearing today was to take the place of any public testimony directly before the SBOE, who will actually vote on the standards.

Many of those involved with this entire process, in my opinion, have tried to fly under the radar and have not given fair notice to the public, to the press, or even to me, a highly-motivated parent just trying to express my views about how my children are to be educated. This is unacceptable in a democracy. At this time we are publicly insisting that 15 minutes be allotted to each side of the issue at the all-day February 19th SBOE meeting in Tallahassee.

It is simply remarkable that the very people who are making this decision are refusing to hear directly from the people whose children's lives and educations are being affected by these standards.