

HOME SCHOOL[®] LEGAL DEFENSE ASSOCIATION

Advocates for Family & Freedom

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March 25, 2003

Mr. Barry Meyer
CEO and Chairman of Warner Brothers, Inc.
4000 Warner Boulevard
Burbank, CA 91522

Re: Upcoming Sitcom, "The O'Keefes"

Dear Mr. Meyer,

By way of introduction, the Home School Legal Defense Association is a national organization dedicated to protecting the rights of parents to choose home education. We presently represent over 75,000 families nationwide who homeschool their children.

Our staff of attorneys works daily on situations where homeschoolers are being harassed by government officials or facing discrimination.

Many members have contacted us recently concerning your upcoming sitcom featuring a homeschool family. The sitcom is called "The O'Keefes." After reviewing your web page, we have concerns that the program presents homeschooling in a light that perpetuates some of the myths about homeschooling.

Homeschoolers are very normal American families. The parents tend to be devoted to their children and sacrifice much to provide an excellent education. All the studies that have been done in the last 15 years show that homeschoolers, on the average, score above average on standardized achievements tests—both in the elementary and the secondary grades. The two college entrance exams, the ACT and the SAT, have also tracked homeschooler performance and have discovered that on the average homeschoolers score above average on these exams. Finally, after graduation, many homeschoolers enter college. The colleges who have surveyed their student body have all found, thus far, that homeschoolers on the average have a higher GPA than the college average.

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One aspect of the program that is especially troubling is the portrayal of the children as “weird” and unsociable. There have been numerous studies done on the socialization of homeschoolers. The homeschool children tend to be better socialized than their public school counterparts. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and other similar measurements are used to measure the student’s self esteem, which directly correlates with their ability to relate to others. In all the studies conducted to date, homeschoolers have scored above the 90th percentile in having strong self-esteem, while an equal number of public school students were shown to score below the 25th percentile.

Homeschoolers are also moving into the workforce with great success and establishing businesses and hiring others. Homeschoolers tend to be very self-reliant and independent.

We believe that the initial description of the sitcom is not an accurate portrayal of the homeschool movement at large. Homeschoolers are very concerned that the program not portray homeschooling in a negative light.

We believe that we can assist you with information to help your sitcom more accurately reflect the homeschool movement. HSLDA was established in 1983 and we have commissioned many studies on homeschooling and work with homeschoolers on a daily basis. We are requesting that you allow us to review your scripts to provide input to help make your program more acceptable in the homeschool community.

If such an arrangement is made, we will communicate this to the homeschool community, which at present is very concerned about the sitcom and likely to produce a grassroots response. This can be prevented if we can communicate to them that you are willing to listen to the homeschoolers and receive their input. This could avoid substantial negative reactions that will inevitably come from the homeschool community if the program communicates a negative and unrealistic view of homeschooling.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible so that we can be involved your program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Michael Smith", written in a cursive style.

Michael Smith, President

MS:PLR

cc: Peter Roth, President, Warner Brothers Television
Jamie Kellner, Chairman and CEO, The WB Network