Parents who teach their children at unregulated homeschools put their heads together Wednesday to block a move to subject their children to state promotion tests.

A cheer arose from more than 100 parents and children crowding a hearing room when the House Education Committee voted 11-4 against HB404 by Rep. Alphonse Jackson, D-Shreveport.

Jackson said the state had an obligation to test home students to be sure they were learning enough from their parent-teachers. The parents argued that they had a right to teach their children without interference from the government.

The committee, obviously in no mood to tamper with the homestudy law, even rejected a less controversial bill that some lawmakers feared would be amended during the legislative process to do violence to home study.

Another bill to repeal the home study law was deferred without debate, apparently ending consideration of the issue for the rest of the legislative session.

The committee delayed action on a fourth Jackson bill that would require private schools not receiving government aid to file attendance reports with the Department of Education.

Jackson said the parents who testified before the committee probably did a good job of teaching their students.

"But what about parents that simply use the law to keep their children out of school?" he said. "Let's be sure that no youngster is cheated ... (out of an) opportunity to be successful.

Several hundred parents have taken advantage of a law that allows them to teach their students at home by proposing a curriculum to the Department of Education.

Some school attendance officers have complained that, since the department did not monitor home schools, uncareful parents could use home study to circumvent compulsory attendance laws.

Jackson said the good parent-teachers should not object to their children taking minimum competency tests, which would eventually be the largest factor in determining whether public-school students were promoted to the next grade.

So far, only second and third graders are subjected to the test. A new grade is being added each year.

"If we're going to have home study of students, let's ensure that they have the ability to read, write, compute and get along with others," Jackson said.

Terry Edward of Baker, who runs a homeschool for his two children with his wife Kathi, said he did not want a local school board to decide whether his child had learned enough to go on to the next level of instruction.

Gerry Hendrix of Baton Rouge said home study had a long tradition of success in developing young minds.