

House Government Accountability & Oversight Committee
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 512
By Angela Boecker, MSA
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Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Angie Boecker and I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony today in opposition to HB 512. I began my studies in political science and law at Miami University and finished my master's degree in the Science of Accountancy. I have participated in the educational system as a preschool teacher, a volunteer through Glandorf Elementary School, and now as a home educator for my three children. Each of these opportunities helped shape my opposition to HB512.

As an active participant in *Ohio Homeschooling Parents*, I am part of a group of nearly 8,000 members. We work together to encourage and support families exerting their rights to home education. The number of homeschooling families continues to grow exponentially and the diversity among members is astonishing. These home educators include conservative Republicans, liberal Democrats, theists, atheists, public educators, and homeschoolers from all walks of life. Even throughout such a diverse group, we find ourselves unified in our opposition to HB512.

The mass email distributed by the sponsors and co-sponsors for this bill explicitly states, “**this bill in no way, shape, or form affects education policy, including homeschooling**”. Yet, proponent testimony illuminates the underlying intent of HB512. Sponsors, co-sponsors, and proponents are praising the bill for providing a "focused, career-based education" and "developing a clear, focused, and streamlined education policy". These points are invalid when taken in concert with the stated "intent" of the bill according to its sponsors. If HB512 absolutely “in no way, shape, or form affects education policy”, what does this bill, in fact, offer other than an unelected, unaccountable bureaucracy to rule over the current boards?

As home educators, we operate based on Ohio Revised Code 3321.04. House Bill 512 is essentially a copy of our Ohio Revised Code with power shifted from the locally elected State Board of Education to the unelected, unaccountable Department of Learning and Achievement. Sponsors and co-sponsors have assured home educators that the bill will have no effect on homeschooling or school choice. However, reading of the bill and its specific verbiage illustrates the potential unintended consequences of the power shift.

Through the creation of an unelected, unaccountable mega bureaucracy, home educators are placed in a position of uncertainty and instability. On page 1,472 of HB 512 it is stated, “The department of learning and achievement may by rule prescribe conditions governing the issuance of excuses, which shall be binding upon the authorities empowered to issue them. **Sec. 3321.07.** If any child attends upon instruction elsewhere than in a public school such instruction shall be in a school which conforms to the minimum standards prescribed by the Department of Learning and Achievement”. The placement of these powers into the hands of an unelected, unaccountable, governor appointed cabinet threatens the autonomy, stability, and consistency of home educators.

The Department of Learning and Achievement will be empowered to establish and interpret current and future policy codes based on the agenda of the Governor and his/her administration, which encourages partisan politics and the elimination of checks and balances. The mega-bureaucracy establishes no accountability to the public or the parents/educators of students. Our students and children will be at risk for tumultuous and unstable educational policy-making and enforcement. The Governor's administration is also subject to change every four years, providing no continuity or consistency in education, as a student's education spans well over two administrative terms. The current members of the DLA will singularly hold the power to interpret and manipulate homeschooling codes and minimum standards, thereby putting home educators at risk for being displaced or manipulated based on a political agenda.

The intent of the bill is to align the educational system with the current and future needs of Ohio's workforce. The verbiage used within the bill, press conferences, mass emails, and proponent testimonies has illustrated the intent of the DLA to track and guide our children and students from "cradle to workforce". As parents and home educators, we are undivided in our stance against this proposal. The process is not about supporting and enhancing the educational system for our children. Rather, it is about placing our children in the "pipeline" and on the conveyor for a mega-bureaucracy to determine how they can be made to better support and enhance the workforce. Our children are not pawns for social engineering and the execution of political agendas.

The sponsors and co-sponsors of House Bill 512 are placing the onus for workforce improvement on the shoulders of our children and students, rather than on the industries struggling to keep employees due to the lack of a living wage and employee benefits. Forcing a twelve-year-old child to carve her pathway based on the needs of a single industry is tantamount to social engineering. How many in this room knew they would be here, in this environment, in their current roles so early in life? By forcing our children and students into the pipeline or conveyor belt toward the governor's future goals, we run the risk of substantial damage in the form of unintended consequences. What happens when the twelve-year-old girl later decides she no longer wants to be a phlebotomist? Now we have a twenty-five-year-old woman who is not prepared for other options in the workforce. The futures of our children need to be determined by each individual child. The onus of preparing them for the future needs to rest with parents, not an unaccountable bureaucracy designed to further the Governor's agenda.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions that the Committee might have.