

**Testimony in Opposition to H.B. No. 512**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**  
**Government Accountability and Oversight Committee**  
**March 7, 2018**

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair and Bill Sponsor Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and Members of the Committee:

I am Eric Resnick, the current Vice President of the Canton City School District Board of Education. I also serve as the Board's Legislative Liaison.

For the purpose of disclosure, my testimony in opposition to H.B. 512 is in that capacity. The Canton City Schools Board of Education has taken no action on this legislation yet.

The Canton City School District is one of Ohio's venerable urban school districts which offers all of our diverse student body, regardless of their situation, comprehensive academics, a full range of community and technical education, advanced placement, a full range of special education services, world class extra-curricular activities, arts and athletics, and a nationally top ranked Early College High School.

The Canton City School District also offers Adult Community and Technical Education which certifies hundreds of adults in areas such as Nursing, Auto Technology, Patient Care, and Medical Billing and Coding. I serve on the ACTE Advisory Board with community members and area business leaders representing all of the disciplines we teach.

Within that context, I strongly oppose H.B. 512, and will lay out my opposition in two points, then a recommendation.

**Point no. 1 – Wait, what?**

When I first heard of this proposal, my initial reaction was, "Wait, they want to do what?"

I am still scratching my head, and subsequently have heard no substantively meritorious reason to do what this bill does.

This proposal is not conservative. In fact, it is quite radical, and for what?

It has been my experience that the state Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education are already collaborating. And as a school district, we already partner with community colleges and universities. It's how we do Early College High School, College Credit Plus, and our local initiative with Kent State University.

As a public school district, I cannot imagine much need for us to be in the business of the Chancellor of Higher Education or the Board of Regents. While many of our graduates go on to attend Ohio institutions of higher learning, their business and focus are different from ours.

On merit, the first strike against H.B. 512 is that it is a solution looking for a problem, which could have adverse consequences for one constituency or another, depending on the interests and attention span of the appointed Director of Learning and Achievement. And do I need to mention politics?

Will public school districts be the step child, or will it be the colleges and universities?

From the perspective of a school district, there is merit to having a department focused on us. Sure, we complain about them at times, but we know who to call, and we know that there are people there focused on our issues. Why would you want to take that away and give us a more chaotic system?

**Point no. 2 – Antithetical to democracy.**

Those of us who are educational leaders have not been asked about this, and have not given any input into this plan, and without thoughtful deliberation, you will set our students, teachers and administrators up for unintended consequences.

And how dare you consider stripping policy making authority from our elected State Board of Education.

The Ohio Constitution requires that there must be a State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Education appointed by that State Board. The majority of that Board is elected by citizens. They are directly accountable to citizens. The State Superintendent is a highly qualified educator accountable to that Board.

Are they perfect? No.

No governing body is, not even you folks. But they work for their citizens and hopefully, they are accessible to their constituents. Our representative on the Board is Nancy Hollister, who is a former member of this body, and for a brief time, Ohio's governor. I find her to be engaged and responsive. She has visited the Canton City School District, and I can easily find her. I have also gotten to know State Board Member Meryl Johnson, who represents the Cleveland area.

These are quality people who care about the students and their constituent districts.

This proposal makes their role little more than ministerial; paper pushers and those who do little more than nod their heads to that which is laid out in statute and regulation they had nothing to do with developing.

The process will suffer if you make it less democratic and more authoritarian, and that's just not right. Worse, Ohio's citizens, regardless of politics, will feel ever father from one of their most important institutions, public education.

Let's face it. This proposal is nothing more than a concentration of power in the hands of a political appointee.

I have been told it is here at the request of Governor Kasich, which is odd given that he's on his way out.

If it's true, it's also pernicious because he won't be able to be held accountable for it, either.

Something this sweeping and this radical would be something I would more likely expect to see in a first session budget of a new governor, not one with nine months to go, and hopefully after it was a campaign issue that the public could ponder.

But this proposal, in addition to being meritless, subverts the normal, regular and expected process of thoughtful policy making.

So let me recap before I make a recommendation.

This proposal has no obvious merit. No one has explained how it will benefit my colleagues on Ohio's elected Boards of Education nor the employees under our supervision, nor the students we work hard to serve, nor the communities in which we live. And in fact, this proposal is way more likely to cause harm and to further disenfranchise the public from education policy makers and set up a new, larger bureaucracy that is less focused, and controlled by a political appointee.

It appears that no one in the world of public education has requested this, and no one in the world of public education has been asked for input.

I don't understand why this is even being given serious consideration. It shouldn't.

### **Point no. 3 – Recommendation.**

Given that we are already in the throes of an election, why not see how the public thinks about this proposal?

I have not heard any candidate for governor talk about such a proposal. Maybe Ohio's next governor won't even like it.

I recommend that you pull this bill off the table and see if any gubernatorial candidate picks it up.

If one does, the voters will hear about it, think about it, and if it is a winner it will at least have the integrity of an electoral vet.

If no one picks it up, it is a sure indicator that it should not be enacted now.

You owe Ohioans better than wantonly moving this bill any closer to passage.

I will gladly answer any questions.

