



Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify today in opposition to House Bill 512. My name is Jeanne Melvin. I am a retired teacher with three dozen years of experience as an educator in Hilliard City Schools and three years of experience teaching in a corporate-owned private school called Singer Learning Center, which was owned by a large sewing machine company from New Jersey. In the 1970s, it was pretty unusual to have an out-of-state corporation making a profit by running schools for young children.

I am a board member of *Public Education Partners (PEP)*, a statewide grassroots advocacy group for public school districts and the children and families that they serve. PEP strongly opposes House Bill 512 and views it as an undemocratic law that will definitely take away the rights of Ohio voters pertaining to education issues. America's representative democracy is the best way for Ohioans to address accountability and oversight of our government leaders to make sure that they follow the will of the people and not the interests of education profiteers.

How very fortunate that government accountability and oversight is what this committee is all about.

The governor stated that "*he* should run education in the state, not a board made of people that voters barely know." <http://s.cleveland.com/m1tLl8W> House Bill 512 proponents have used similar talking points. With that logic, one could argue that many people don't know who their elected representatives are (the Ohio Legislature website has a link called *Find My Legislator*), so most of their power should be removed and given to an appointed cabinet-level agency. Most people don't know who the Ohio

Supreme Court justices are – should those elected judges' duties be awarded to an appointed agency controlled by the governor?

Decisions made by members of the State Board of Education are crucial to every Ohioan. Board members create academic standards and definitions, approve curriculum, and establish test benchmarks. The Board sets the policy direction for public schools, establishing policies concerning charter schools, vouchers, professional development, educational licenses, and more. Much like this committee, the state school board focuses on accountability and oversight.

Because of the State Board's influence, it's very important to have members who are true advocates for public education. I know of several members of the state BOE who possess those important qualities, including my state board representative, Dr. Antoinette Miranda, a Professor of School Psychology at The Ohio State University. She has spent over 35 years in both K-12 and post-secondary education and has worked as a school psychologist in urban, suburban, and rural districts in multiple states.

Dr. Miranda, as well as other elected state school board members, serve the will of their constituents and not the interests of education profiteers. They certainly represented taxpayers in recent years by demanding much-needed accountability and oversight from ECOT founder William Lager. What a travesty that HB 512 will incapacitate their authority and award it to cabinet members most likely appointed by political favor.

In 1953, Ohio voters passed a constitutional amendment that established an all-elected state board of education and a superintendent of public instruction to be appointed by that board, which indicated an intention to separate the Department of Education from the governor's office.

Ohio politicians must not circumvent the will of the people with this fast-moving piece of legislation. If they do, we can all say GOODBYE to the accountability and oversight of Ohio education issues guaranteed by the power of the vote. Please say NO to House Bill 512!