

Good afternoon Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and distinguished members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee,

My name is Lisa Cagigas Johnson and I am here today to urge you to oppose HB 512.

I am the married mother of two teenage daughters and our family resides in Geauga county. I have been very engaged in my children's education since pre-school. At that time, we lived in NY state and, at the time, parents in our community had a very important voice in how our district ran. Parents had a place on the school's curriculum committee and our local school board had significant oversight and authority regarding the curriculum in our school. School Board meetings were generally not contentious and parents were a respected part of the education process. School board members understood their accountability to the parents and members of the community who elected them. It worked.....and it worked for a majority of the schools in the country. Then, several years later, in 2013, everything about our schools changed. The curriculum committee was dissolved and Common Core, (a primary requirement within Race To The Top (RTTT)), was ushered into our schools. The elementary school that my daughters attended became a Common Core pilot school. We were suddenly following a mandated state model curriculum and there was no explanation beforehand or input taken from parents. As more and more parents witnessed the negative aspects of the change, our school board meetings became contentious. Our Superintendent finally publicly explained to the parents of our community that they had no choice, that the Governor had made the decision and that all districts were forced to participate in the RTTT program. Our Superintendent also shared that our local school board had at first declined to complete the RTTT MOU as they understood it was a game changer and would remove significant authority from their Board. However, they, and many other districts across the state, were contacted by the Governor's office and told that they had to complete the "voluntary" MOU because the state was going to require the RTTT changes of all districts whether or not they completed it and completing it would at least get the district some money to implement the mandated changes.

At that time, I joined with a small group of other concerned parents and we started educating ourselves on RTTT. What we learned was absolutely shocking. We learned Race To The Top was billed as a "voluntary" competitive grant program and that every state (except 5), through their Governor's office, had committed itself to guaranteeing the fulfillment of several "assurances" which would result in

the overhaul of education policy in each state. [The Governor's did this in exchange for hundreds of millions dollars. (Which we now know was only a drop in the bucket for what it has and will cost each state and the nation overall. RTTT divvied up 4.35 billion, current estimates for what the nation actually spent and will continue to spend to fully implement are somewhere between three to four times that amount.) (<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2014/02/05/number-states-backing-out-common-core-testing-maryland-schools-low-on-funding.html>)] The number of and magnitude of the requirements within the competitive grant program were unprecedented in a federal education grant. So much so, that a law containing them would never pass Congress, nor any state legislature. RTTT was a brilliant run around this obstacle; that obstacle being the voice of the people; specifically parents. The combination of the leadership of the National Governor's Association regarding Common Core, combined with the amount of money at stake during a time when our country was facing severe economic problems, made it easy for Governors to endorse it. In fact, their signatures were required on the 250 plus page application.

It was clear that parents had been completely omitted from the process. It was clear that we had to find a way to educate parents on what was happening to their children's schools because no one else was going to. [We read about parents in other states who had started offering educational presentations to parents throughout their states.] So, a small group of us started holding presentations for communities throughout western NY state ~ we spoke to hundreds of parents. Then, my family was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to relocate back to NE Ohio. I was hoping that Ohio hadn't gone full throttle yet into Common Core and most of the parents I'd met in our new community hadn't heard of it. Then, just like in NY and almost overnight, parents were becoming keenly aware of the changes to curriculum and the associated testing and data-mining that was underway. I joined with other parents here and we continued that traveling "tour" educating parents about what was happening. We called it "parents helping parents get the facts" and again, reached hundreds of parents throughout NE Ohio and connected with thousands more on social media throughout the state and the country.

Two of the four major parts of RTTT required all schools of each state to implement common core state standards and to significantly increase the data collected in their Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) on each student and teacher.

Regarding the common core, according to the National Governor's Association, the standards were written by a Standards Development Workgroup ([https://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page\\_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/common-core-state-standards-deve.html](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/common-core-state-standards-deve.html)). 80% of the workgroup was comprised of testing companies, not teachers. In fact, according to the NGA, there wasn't a single elementary or high school teacher on that committee. America's Choice, an organization that falls under the umbrella of the National Center for Education and the Economy had two representatives on this committee of 30. The CEO of NCEE is Marc Tucker. He is an influential and controversial figure in the history of America's education policy over the last several decades. I will come back to him later.

One of the key take aways for parents was that common core was written by testing companies so that the standards could be taught, tested and tracked in a very specific way. The extent of the student tracking cannot be over stated. It has been in development for years and got the "final push" to gather hundreds of additional data-points on our children through RTTT. In 2014, we shared a snapshot of this image displayed throughout the US Department of Education's website regarding their goals for each states's SLDS (<https://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/publications.asp>) A picture is worth a thousand words....we told parents that all states, including Ohio, were well on their way to tracking our children from birth to workforce and beyond. Tracking begins in the womb if the mother used state funded healthcare (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/ohio.pdf>) and extends into the child's "sustained participation in the workforce" (<https://www.doleta.gov/performance/workforcedataquality.cfm>). Think baby barcodes that follow you all the way into and throughout adulthood. This of course was almost impossible for most parents to believe and many parents simply didn't want to believe it. Everything stated in our presentation was from government documentation, nothing was left to opinion.

[For example, from Ohio's January 2010, 262 page RTTT application, signed by the Governor, we shared the following:

"Ohio is moving toward the creation of a comprehensive and fully integrated early childhood system. Governor Ted Strickland added strength to this goal in 2009 by introducing language in H.B. 1 to create the Center for Early Childhood Development. The Center is authorized to become the single administrative structure with the responsibility for state-funded early childhood programs and services for children pre-natal through entry into kindergarten. **The Center integrates programs previously administered by Ohio's Departments of**

**Education, Job and Family Services, and Health. To ensure an effective, coherent, and integrated early childhood accountability system, it is critical for state agencies to be able to link and track children’s program experiences, progress, and development from birth to age six.”**

“In December 2009, the **Ohio General Assembly took the critical step necessary to enable Ohio’s SLDS** to meet the final DQC recommended essential element and to fully meet all of the elements of the America COMPETES Act (ACA).

Amended House Bill 290 (H.B. 290) passed by the 128<sup>th</sup> Ohio General Assembly on December 17, 2009 (Appendix C.1.5) **removed the legislative restrictions that had historically prohibited sharing the P-12 unique student identifier with higher education**, and had thereby prevented the linkage of P-12 student data with postsecondary student data in Ohio.

Additionally, each section of the RTTT application had instruction from the Secretary of Education. This is from section “Priority (P)(5)”: The Secretary is particularly interested in applications in which the State plans to address how early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, workforce development organizations, and other State agencies and community partners (*e.g.*, child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice agencies) will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a more seamless preschool-through-graduate school (P-20) route for students. (now the P-12 file is a P-20 file and much more comprehensive) ]

In our parent presentations, we lay all of this out, and in much more detail, citing only government documents and websites. Which begs the question, why? Why did the USDOE, in conjunction with our Governor’s office, go to so much effort and spend billions of dollars to overhaul our education system without informing or getting buy in from the number one consumer of the system, parents. The answer, we explained to parents, in 2014, was and is workforce management. We shared with parents the governor’s “career connections” embedded throughout the state’s model curriculum beginning in kindergarten. We shared a career connection from second grade in which the teacher is guided to help the kids develop questions for guest speakers such as “how much money could someone make starting out, do you need a certificate or license (degree was not suggested as an option) and what education and training is required.” That was second grade. ([http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Academic-Content-Standards/Social-Studies/Grade-2-Social-Studies-Model-Curriculum\\_April2014.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Academic-Content-Standards/Social-Studies/Grade-2-Social-Studies-Model-Curriculum_April2014.pdf.aspx))

In February of 2015, the DOE published a draft report/white paper (<http://pgbovine.net/OET-Draft-Grit-Report-2-17-13.pdf>) which included a list of the ways in which the Department would like to gather additional personal data on our kids. It's called "educational data-mining" or "affective computing". It's defined in this document as the "study and development of systems and devices that can recognize, interpret, process and simulate aspects of human affect". It goes on to say that the goal is to focus on "micro-level" moment by moment data with digital and blended learning environments". In other words, the devices that our children use in school will have the ability to, in affect, develop a psychological profile of sorts on them; all without parental approval.

Clearly, the state has set massive goals for the amount of things they want to know about our children, including social and emotional data that, if gathered in a doctor's office, would first require parental consent and then would be protected by HIPPA. (<https://truthinamericaneducation.com/common-core-state-standards/a-mental-health-professionals-perspective-on-the-common-core/>) Neither is true here. Parental consent is not required and the information gathered is not protected by HIPPA. [The state has no right to formally assess the character of our children. Of course, if you're trying to micro-manage the workforce and place our children into specific career or college paths, then you would need to know a lot more than just their academic records, you would need to know much about their social and emotional status, their family, their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. History, though, has already judged what happens when governments study and train on proper "attitudes" and "behaviors". **The study of our children's "behaviors" was stated in the press conference as a goal.**] This is a highly sensitive topic and one we should all be able to agree is not the right of any government. In fact, when character development was handled locally, primarily by the parent and teacher, we had a much more civil and respectful community. I think we can all agree that the state has no right to impose its values on any child. [For the record, in CA, schools are already grading students' character. It's was written into the state's education code and now is being used as the state's right to grade character. (California Education Code Section 233.5 (a) & (b))]

[Ohio's 2010 RTTT application also said this: Commitment to education reform includes senior leadership from the full range of stakeholders, including the Governor, the General Assembly, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Board of Regents of Ohio's higher education system, the State Board of Education, national, state, and local unions, leading non-profit and philanthropic organizations, and the business community.]

Please note that parents were not included as a stakeholders in Ohio's RTTT application.

Along those lines, watching the press conference on HB 512, I noticed a glaring omission - one that I'm guessing none of you noticed, as we don't seem to be on the radar, parents. The word parent wasn't uttered once and of course none were in attendance as stakeholders. One might think that based on the current business/workforce centric education policy and on the individuals chosen to speak at the press conference, that our education system exists simply as a pipeline for the business community. I didn't hear a single reference to the parents of the children about which these men were speaking. [ I can promise you that not a single government official, staff member or business person cares more about the future of our children than their parents do. I also know of no parents who hold their newborn baby and say, "I can't wait to see what job the state prepares you for". ]

I mentioned Marc Tucker earlier. He is the CEO of the National Center for Education and the Economy. It's mission, as stated on their website, is "to analyze the implications of changes in the international economy for American education, formulate an agenda for American education based on that analysis and seek wherever possible to accomplish that agenda through policy change and development of the resources educators would need to carry it out" (<http://ncee.org/who-we-are/>) Anyone who has studied the evolution of the American education system, knows of Mr. Tucker. It is a letter he wrote to Hilary Clinton in 1992 just after President Bill Clinton won his first term that is important for today's discussion. The letter was 18 pages long and was entered into the Congressional record in 1998. (<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-1998-09-25/pdf/CREC-1998-09-25-pt1-PgE1819-2.pdf#page=4>) Mr. Tucker is a proponent of many of the education systems around the world, including Germany as just one example of an education system that he endorses. Germany, for those of you who may not know, has a tightly controlled, centralized government run education system in which children are tracked very closely and their career path is determined by about the age of 12. Mr. Tucker writes to Mrs. Clinton with incredibly detailed suggestions regarding how he and his team think the Department of Education could and should be reorganized under the Clinton administration. It's both fascinating and horrifying to realize how much control certain individuals and organizations whom no one has elected to any office have over something so important and so personal as how my children are educated in my community and at my school. I've pulled a few lines for you, but I urge to read the entire letter so that you can be sure to see the context. He writes:

“We think the great opportunity you have is to remold the entire American System for human resources development”

"What is essential is that we create a seamless web of opportunities, to develop one's skills that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone..."

“Trying to ram it down everyone's throat would engender overwhelming opposition”

“The legislation would require the executive branch to establish a competitive grant program for these states and cities and to engage a group of organizations to offer technical assistance to the expanding set of states and cities engaged in designing and implementing the new system”

It's amazing that this vision was outlined in 1992 and the folks we've elected to protect our rights in 2014 seem to be aiding in its fruition right now.

The website for the US Department of Labor lists the following objectives for its Workforce Data Quality Initiative: “Enable workforce data to be matched with education data to ultimately create longitudinal data systems with *individual-level information* beginning with pre-kindergarten through post-secondary schooling all the way through entry and sustained participation in the workforce and employment services system.”

By the conclusion of our presentation, parents understand that education for the whole person, their child, is no longer the goal, rather it is workforce training and preparation. The education system that was created to support parents in their effort to educate their children is now about manufacturing workers. In 2014, we told parents that this effort was underway and that workforce preparation would become the primary goal starting in pre-school. All of the speakers at the press conference talked “pre-K” in their comments regarding workforce preparation. Think about that for second ~ are we really supporting education policy that uses “pre-k” and “workforce preparation” in the same sentence? We apparently are ~ and it was repeated throughout the entire press conference.

In 2014, we also told parents that eventually our parental rights and children's rights to determine their own path after high school would slowly and quietly diminish until they are gone completely from the public education system. The path we are on is poised to end mirroring the education system of China, Russia,

Germany, Australia, just to name a few. Anyone who doesn't believe this isn't paying attention to what is happening in the global education system. Everything that has happened in American education throughout the last 40 years has been optional, simply until it wasn't. Think standards based education, high-stakes assessments, model curriculums, state written rubrics for teacher and principal evaluations, excessive amounts of invasive student data gathering without parental approval, neutering of the local school board, the forced implementation of digital learning environments that have the ability to assess students SEL without parental approval, the creation and maintenance of a SLDS that follows our children from, "cradle to grave" or "crib to career". These are terms commonly used to discuss government education policies in socialized countries. No person elected to represent the people in our democratic republic should ever use these terms. Anyone who thinks that, if given the kind of power described in HB 512, that the state won't take this next step, within the next decade and under the guise of ensuring a "quality workforce" is, to put it nicely, naive.

I would ask each of you to think about where you might be today if you had been part of this education system, a part of this social experiment and if your choices for life after high school were managed and still tracked by the state? Would you be sitting here today? [Would you trade any of the life experiences that made you who you are today or brought you to this place?]

It seems perhaps you too are pawns in this game of exercising more and more control over the citizens of our great country. A game that is being played in the global education system and in which the main players are far, far removed from the parents in our country, in our state and in our local communities. [What makes this extra evil though, is that it denies parents their God-given right to direct their children's education and it denies our children the freedom to determine their own futures, to find their own passions and to pursue their own dreams without a state mandated data-file following them around. Our education system used to be the best at that. It's no coincidence that over 90% of the world lived in poverty before America was founded and now less than 10% does. ] It is no coincidence that the decline of our nation's education system over the last four decades parallels the creation of the USDOE.

I speak for thousands of parents when I share with you how mentally, physically and emotionally draining it has been to be a parent who has a child in the school system over these last several years. We've watched our role diminish in both society as a whole and in one of the most important things we do as a parent ~ ensure the quality education of our children.

So many hard working, concerned and engaged parents and educators have spent the last several years and sacrificed thousands of personal hours working to get the education committee to pass a bill (and there have been several!) to help us resolve some of our significant school problems. Myself included. In both 2014 and again in 2017, I offered proponent testimony in favor of two different education bills. The Education Committee has done nothing year after year to provide any solutions. The committee has not passed any of the proposed bills that offered real solutions. They've done virtually nothing to help our schools and now the chairman of that committee is a co-sponsor on this bill. It certainly appears that the Chairman of the Education Committee now wants to pass the buck to a new agency and he wants your Committee to do it. Thousands of parents have tried to be part of the solution for the last few years and to no avail. We have offered serious, reasonable, evidence based solutions. Now, we are being thanked for those efforts by the elimination of the only folks who *have been* accessible and who, as far as I can tell, have been the only group of *elected officials* to even try to be a part of the solution.

In the sponsor testimony delivered on February 20, it was stated that one of the primary reasons for creating the Department of Learning and Achievement, is to manage the gap between Ohio's current attainment rate and the attainment rate that will be required by 2020. I reviewed the resources cited in the testimony regarding attainment rates in our state and how they do and will match with anticipated job growth in the state over the next 2-7 years. The testimony notes that a Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (GCEW) report shows that 64% of Ohio's jobs will require post-secondary education by 2020. According to the Lumina report that was cited, Ohio's attainment rate, as defined by the attainment of an Associates Degree, a Bachelor's degree or a Masters Degree, is currently at about 44%. However, upon closer review, it seems that this comparison is not using an apples to apples approach. The attainment rate documented in the Lumina report for Ohio does not take into consideration the category "some college/no degree", however, the Georgetown report does. (<http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2018/#state/OH>) Therefore, when the number cited in the testimony from the Lumina report regarding Ohio's current attainment rate is adjusted for this variable, it is actually about 60%. (Page 8 of the GCEW documents Ohio's attainment rate at 54% in 2010). Therefore, the gap isn't nearly what the sponsor testimony puts forth, there is not a 20% gap. More realistically, we're looking at about a 3%-5% gap. The two rates appear to be parallel and therefore on track. In the event that this bill passes, it very important that we all agree on the starting point here regrading what gap actually exists. It would certainly be unethical to look at these numbers again in a few years, in an effort to determine any improvement in

attainment rate, and at that time use a different measure that might show a favorable effect, when in reality, no meaningful gap exists today.

With this attainment gap now viewed through a more realistic lens, it seems to me that the problem this bill seeks to remedy, isn't improving "pre-k to workforce preparation", it is simply to control it. The Governor's office wants more control, citing the complexities of the current system. I agree that there are complexities in the current system. Our founders created a brilliant system with those types of complexities in mind. We have a system that ensures that rash decisions, especially those that are highly political and polarizing, and that directly affect the people, can not be made. While frustrating at times, reasonable people understand that this is the best way, really the only way, to govern in a free society.

Mr. Gunlock said in his proponent testimony, "The fractured governance structure we have gets in the way. It makes sense to me that we look at how we can make the governance of our K-12 education system more transparent and efficient. That's a conversation worth having." I agree, let's have that conversation. My first question is where can I sit? There doesn't seem to be a seat at the table for parents; the group of citizens who are most concerned and the most affected. Does it seem right that the business community or some form there of gets all the seats? [For the record, I am an entrepreneur. I started my own business. I have many close friends and family members who have their own businesses. I am absolutely not anti-business. I just don't think the business community should have a larger voice in education policy than parents do.] The business community does not deserve more respect than the parent community.

Something else that strikes me about this bill is the lack of detail as to exactly how the DLA is going to improve our alleged attainment rate gap or anything for that matter. [In casual conversation over the last few years with friends and peers who have job responsibility for hiring young adults, the number one problem I hear about is work ethic. They can find young people to hire, but they can't find people who actually want to work. Attainment rates will naturally increase as young people learn the value of work and as they make the connection between deposit and return; when they are actually taught that only they, as individuals, have the actual power to move their life forward.] Our young people don't need a new government agency to threaten our schools with more unrealistic metrics for which they will be measured. Even the name of the department gets it all wrong. Learning and Achievement. Learning and achievement cant' be legislated or forced. Those are natural outcomes to proper and personal teaching. One human being cannot be held accountable for the learning or achievement of another.

Imagine if your doctor and hospital were held personally accountable for your blood pressure, glucose level, cholesterol and weight? That's a ridiculous expectation. How you receive, process and use the information they give you to manage these things is up to you, or perhaps it is pre-determined by your genetics.

If you agree, via your support of this bill, that the *state* is responsible for my children's "achievement", then my next question is when exactly would that achievement be measured? when have we officially achieved? at 18? at 22? at retirement? Perhaps this is why the new department will need to track every citizen through, as the DOL put it, "sustained participation in the workforce?". Aren't we all glad that we were born before this all started? The state doesn't have a life long file on us. But it will on our children and grandchildren; and for generations to come, and if bills like this, which erode rights, rather than protect them, continue to pass this body.

[The public was told that one of the goals of RTTT and Common Core was to help the lowest achieving and poorest schools. However, the wide net of RTTT caught every public school, regardless of their performance, while millions of dollars in resources that went to overhauling the state's entire public education system should have been spent on those schools. And now, billions of dollars later, were apparently no better off.]

And what about Common Core? Parents were told that common core was the answer to preparing our children ~ common core was the way to preparing our children for the "21st century economy", which, by the way, was created by people educated in the 20th century. That clearly hasn't worked ~ which thousands of parents in Ohio, and millions across the country, tried to tell our representatives that it wouldn't. Now, our representatives want to double down on the beaurocratic engine that brought us RTTT, Common Core, and a bigger more intrusive SLDS by taking away the only voice we have left through our SBE.

[The state doesn't need a new department or a change in law in order to identify those schools in which there is most room to improve the attainment rate and at which students and parents could use extra support to identify paths to increased secondary attainment and personal achievement. ]

The bill sponsor mentioned "mission fog" as one of the problems in the education system today. I believe that this is absolutely correct. In an effort to clear the fog, the mission of education is to provide a classic and relevant education so that our children can graduate equipped to manage their own futures. Period. It is not the

job of the state to track and manage the life decisions of our nation's young people once they graduate. They are adults and should be respected as such.

Our state government is not a workforce placement agency for our kids. [It is not the state's job to find my children a job. Again, that is standard operating procedure in socialized countries.]

I find it reprehensible that one group of elected representatives would introduce a bill with the purpose of stripping away the role and responsibilities of another group of elected representatives. Especially when one of the primary purposes of that group is to represent parents, the most under-represented and un-heard voice in the education system today.

The reason the American education system was so good for so long was because it was *decentralized* and it not only allowed, but in many cases required, parental input. There is no evidence to suggest that a bigger government agency is going to improve anything. In fact, any evidence is to the contrary. This is about control, not kids.

Interestingly, Ohio's RTTT application also states "...Ohio's education governance structure is sheltered from short-term political pressures in a way that ensures continuity and implementation of our RTTT plan regardless of political climate as the State Board of Education is a bipartisan organization and holds the responsibility for appointing the Superintendent." In 2010, our state government recognized the value of an elected, bipartisan state board of education. What happened?

I understand that, based on the state constitution, you have the right to introduce legislation that would neuter the SBE and take away the only voice that parents have left with regard to education policy. However, as I tell my children, just because you have the right to do something, doesn't mean it is the right thing to do.

I urge the members of this committee to protect the voices of parents across the state and to oppose HB 512. This is very personal for us. These are our children. And you're talking about them in this bill, in the press conference and in all of the testimony that I have read so far as if they were widgets. My children aren't widgets, they are people.

In closing, it is a fact that unelected bureaucrats in our government agencies both at the Federal and state levels have more influence on the everyday life of the average

American than do our elected members of Congress or our State Legislature. The devil is always in the details, and these departments are always anointed with the authority to determine those details. "Government 101" teaches that the farther away the decision makers are from the people, the less power the people have, the more likely it is that their rights will be violated and that abuses of power by those decision makers will go unrecognized and unaccounted for. I urge you to consider what message you are sending to the parents and teachers of our state, and, also, how your vote on this bill will have direct consequences for your family, your friends, and your community for generations to come. Instead of voting to take power away from parents by giving it to a larger, unelected, inaccessible, unaccountable, and non-transparent department of the state, under the direct control and influence of the Governor, please do what I hope you will come to believe is the right thing to do. A vote in opposition to HB 512 is a vote to protect what is left of our parental voice, our parental authority and our parental rights in the education system.

Thank you.