

Thank you to the Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee for allowing me this opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 512. My name is Mary Williams and I have been an elected school board member for going on 13 years. My involvement in politics started when I attended a board of education meeting in 2005 to support a student who was being recognized for an achievement. What I didn't expect that evening is that I would be drawn into a situation where a parent poured her heart out to the board regarding her son's education. The reply she received was distant, apathetic and, in my opinion unacceptable. Don't ever get a mom mad. So I stood up and informed that board that their response was not acceptable what so ever. I didn't even know that mother or her son, but what I did know, was that her voice was not being listened to.

After that fateful night, many of our parents approached me and strongly suggested that I run for school board. And so I did, and so I won. I'll never forget my superintendent telling me I had a snowball's chance in heck of winning because I was simply a PTO mom. Like I said, never get a mom mad.

School board is pretty much a thankless job, and your definitely not in it for the money and definitely not the status. Your in it for the love of children - it's that simple. I always joke, can't get much lower in the political spectrum then school board. And yet every time I say that, people sincerely look at me and remind me, school board is where the core of democracy starts! HB 512 wants to destroy that!

In the fifties, changes were made to the Ohio Constitution , where people voted to elect state school board members to represent their region. By passing HB 512 , virtually all the power from these duly elected officials will be removed. No longer will my voice, my parents voices, and our my students voices will be heard in Columbus where decisions are being made that effect each and every one of us.

If you all find passage of HB 512 is so important, then take it to the voters of Ohioans via a constitutional amendment. I do admit, there are issues regarding the education processes in Ohio, but rushing this through without careful consideration must, and I repeat, must not happen. HB 15 takes away all responsibilities away from our elected state board of education members and instead sends these responsibilities to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats. Our parents and our students deserve better. HB 512 doesn't solve any problems, it instead creates a new, massive agency under the authority of a SINGLE person appointed by the governor.

This bill negatively impacts every form of education in Ohio. Under HB 512, the Governor will appoint one director, whereas currently we, the people of Ohio, vote for 11 elected members and 8 are appointed by the Governor. This one appointed representative will be making decisions that will effect traditional public schools, private schools, religious schools, home education, e-schooling and career tech schools. One person! No matter what political belief you live , this is troublesome.

I implore you all to stop HB 512 now before it goes any further. The future of the educational process in Ohio depends on you doing the right thing.

Again, thank you for your time.