

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 512  
PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**Offered by Michael Collins, Former Two Term Member of the Westerville City School District; Two Term Elected Member of the State Board of Education; and Founder and President of The Michael Collins Group**

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, and Members of the House Governmental Affairs and Oversight Committee:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I extend my gratitude for this opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 512.

I stand before you as both a former education professional and and a four time elected representative of both school district and state educational governing bodies. Additionally, I've had the distinct pleasure and responsibility of representing in excess 160 districts, from scores of rural, urban and suburban communities, during my elected service to public education.

The real issue before us moves far past the notion that a super-state agency under the Governor would result in a better education agency and provide a more comprehensive workforce. In reality, it is a proposal that transfers all major duties of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to a bureaucratic environment. It also places politics in the forefront of our educational system.

Issues such as school funding, graduation requirements, report cards and state assessments would be decided by a politically appointed staff with minimal accountability and public input. The last thing Ohio's educational system needs is politicians designing an educational agency that places

politics in front of the educational needs and potential of our 1.78 million students.

Furthermore, I'm still trying to find any reliable research anywhere in the United States that suggests such a reconfiguration of an educational environment that will benefit the educational performance and the future employment of our students today or tomorrow.

As a two-term member of the State Board of Education I personally saw and participated in two very different politically influenced milieus over those eight years of service.

One was guided by the respectful exchange of educational ideas between and among the offices of the elected state administrative and legislative branches surrounding Capital Square.

Then there was the overt politicalization of Ohio's education system placing political philosophy over the best educational practices of our day.

During this eight year timeframe, Ohio's national educational rankings fell from fifth in 2010 to the mid 20's over the last six years...what does that tell us?

HB512 was thrust upon Ohio without conversations with the state's significant educational associations, organizations, educational experts and parents. Furthermore, the absence of involvement of Paolo DeMaria, Ohio's successful state educational leader exemplifies the rush and absence of forethought that accompanies this piece of legislation.

HB512 places students, educators, parents, and school districts in a cavern of an expanded bureaucracy without evidence and expertise needed to advance the critical work of our public school districts.

There is a great deal of adult political ideology wrapped around this legislation, with no regard for the research of best practices.

As a previous state board member, I cannot leave alone the irony attached to the testimony of a former colleague of mine on the State Board of Education regarding the ineffectiveness and lack of necessity of our State Board of Education. It baffles one when we realize that during the time of his service on the Board, Ohio's rankings declined when he was either the vice-president or president of the elected body he now so avidly criticizes...interesting!

Another significant ironic element of this legislative proposal bears witness to fact that the authors of this bill are recorded, staunch supporters of parental choice, yet the suggested stripping of the State Board of Education's responsibilities takes the future of Ohio's educational system out of the hands of parents. Their rights of electing this leadership is taken and given to bureaucrats and politicians. Am I missing something here?

Please be reminded that there is no data to suggest that the creation of this agency WILL:

1) provide students with a better education, 2) make them career and college ready, 3) save the taxpayer money or doing anything else to benefit the students and our state?...

BUT IT WILL: 1) alter the intent and content of our state constitution, 2) take away a much needed de-politicalization of our educational system, 3) take away the ultimate responsibility of public education... and, 4) enhance the "feathering of the political nest" of the office of the Governor.

I ask that you please rethink the the need and value of this piece of legislation and if deemed necessary, consider some thoughtful alterations to the agency alignment of the educational community, that will focus on:

what's best for our students and honors a constitutional design; that when allowed to operate unimpeded, has carried Ohio's educational system to significant heights. I welcome each of you to join me and others in any and all conversations that keeps our public school systems in the minds and hands of our citizenry.

Please let us all remember, that our public school systems at all levels operate at their best, when the interests of the people are served through publicly elected Boards and the State Board of Education, with NO exceptions!

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and I hope we make the opportunity to continue this conversation in the near future.