

House Government Accountability & Oversight Committee Opponent Testimony on House Bill  
512

By Ani Karetka

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My name is Ani Karetka and I would like to offer written testimony in opposition to HB 512. I have a degree in both English Literature and Chemical Engineering, and am presently homeschooling my three children. I am opposed to HB 512.

I will begin my testimony by bringing up another example of a similar situation in my community of Geauga County. We have a wonderful park system that everyone has been proud of and has shown support for by always passing levies for it's funding. In the past we have had a very conscientious board that planned land purchases, money uses and land development years in advance, using taxpayer money wisely. The members of the board were on the committee for years and thus knew what the park mission was and how they have been executed over time, providing stability and continuity. There was accountability, and they were open to public input and public scrutiny. Then we had a change and a new Probate Judge arrived who did not value the park, the board, the continuity, or the public. He has single handedly (because the authority to place board members lies solely with him, per Ohio Revised Code) changed the board over and over again to suit his own purposes of draining the park fund of it's saved money, has taken away transparency and has silenced public input by not allowing citizens to voice their concerns in public meetings. Because his single handed authority is part of the Ohio Revised Code, we as citizens have no way to change the situation unless the code is changed.

HB 512 is EXACTLY the same type of situation. If we put our entire educational decisions into the hands of one person, we are completely at that persons mercy and the mercy of his or her ideals. It will not matter if the citizens disagree or agree. There will be no means of changing whatever comes down the pipeline. And these changes can potentially occur every 4 years, every year, or even several times a year, depending on the whims of the single person in charge. And who will pay the price of these potentially constant changes? Our children, our families, and ultimately businesses.

The department created under HB 512 will be very unstable because of the potential for constant change and instability leads to chaos and havoc. There is no continuity, no accountability, no transparency and no ability of the citizens to voice their concerns and be heard. This new board will singularly hold the power to manipulate codes and minimum standards at their whim. This puts everyone at risk and undermines what this nation was built upon. The voice of citizens in a democracy.

HB 512 was created on the premise of education and enhancing the educational system for our children, but it does none of that. What it does is to make our children items on a conveyor belt, a belt that can have as many twists and turns as there are ideas in the Governors head. To place our children and their future at the mercy of someone else's whims is treacherous. Our children are not inanimate objects to be used for social engineering and the execution of political agendas. They are people with individual ideas, needs, and futures that mega-burocracy has no business manipulating. The responsibility and obligation of preparing them for the future needs to rest with parents, and the parents must be able to have a direct voice in the government that would facilitate that preparation.