

House Government Accountability & Oversight Committee
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 512
By Angela Boecker
March 14, 2018

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Angie Boecker and I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony today in opposition to HB 512.

I attended and testified at the previous hearing on March 7, 2018. I finished the very long day with more questions than answers. After doing additional research, many new pieces of evidence have presented themselves and I find myself in a stronger stance of opposition than ever before.

Not only does HB512 propose to take public accountability out of education, it places the full spectrum of our educational process into the hands of a single individual; currently Governor John Kasich. Unfortunately, Ohio has followed this agenda before. Where did it lead us? It earned our state a “C” and a rank of 23rd, scoring a 74.9% on the annual Quality Counts report by *Education Week*, an education trade newspaper. The report also highlighted Ohio as landing among the worst states in the country for gaps in the national test scores based on socioeconomic factors, ranking 43rd. According to the July 2015 White House report, “Ohio has the country’s ninth largest reading gap between its highest- and lowest-performing schools, as well as the second-largest achievement gap in math, and the fourth largest gap in high school graduation rates”. How did we manage to fall from a rank of 5th in the country in 2010 to a current rank of 23rd, and a rank of 43rd concerning the highest gaps based on socioeconomic factors? From extensive research, the answer has become clear. The educational mess we find ourselves in evolved based on a presidential run by Governor John Kasich.

A specific issue confronting our state’s education system is the obvious scandal surrounding ECOT. As a state, we faced budget cuts for public schools, while increasing funding for charter schools, such as ECOT. The number of high-performing charter schools had been grossly overreported at 93, while the real number of such schools was 59. Based on Innovation Ohio’s August 2015 report, public schools, which educate the vast majority of Ohio’s students, received \$515 million less in state funding than they received before Kasich took office. Yet the funding for charter schools, such as the scandalized ECOT, increased over 27% over the same expanse of time. According to the 2015 article by the Akron Beacon Journal, “since 2001, state auditors have uncovered \$27.3 million improperly spent by charter schools, many run by for-profit companies, enrolling thousands of children and producing academic results that rival the worst in the nation”. There goes that duck quacking about ECOT’s revenge through this bill.

Following the money trail for this bill is alarming and brings up concerns about the drafting of HB512. While the bill itself does not specifically transfer money to interested parties, such as charter schools, vocational schools, and career centers, it places the financial prowess into the hands of the unelected, appointed DLA. This gives the Governor the ability to manipulate the

distribution of educational funds based on his political agenda, rather than on the best future for our children. We have witnessed a serious abuse of power via David Hanson circa 2015. Hanson faced forced resignation after acting to make charter schools appear to be performing better in state evaluations than they actually were. We have also seen the disintegrating and devastating effect Kasich has had on education through the unsuccessful takeover of Youngstown schools.

Kasich's 2016 campaign site reviews his educational stance. According to the verbiage on the site, Kasich "has also reinforced that education is a local responsibility, not one to be micromanaged by federal bureaucrats". The governor has also been quoted on Fox News concerning his educational position stating "I support high standards and local control. That's what we do in Ohio. Our state school board approves the standards, and the local school boards are the ones that create the curriculum," Kasich said, adding, "I am for total local control." It appears very suspicious that his stance has changed in the aftermath of the downfall of ECOT.

Kasich's stance seems to change based on his current mood. He openly supported concepts such as Common Core State Standards, right up until he didn't. Then his support sailed off into the sunset as quickly as his Conservative donators lost interest in the Core. Kasich has stated, time and again, that he wants control over the State Board of Education. He is quoted at an associated press forum as stating, "What I really want...I want to be able to run the Department of Education. I don't think we should have this elected school board". He went on to say that a governor should be in charge of the state's educational processes and regulations. "We have no clue who these people are, and they're running educational policy. And I'm the governor and I can't tell them what to do. It's nuts." It's not nuts, John, it's the democratic process.

Kasich has proven where his priorities rest when it comes to the education of our children. His priority is being able to command the fleet fronting the educational battle. Kasich's focus is on the "look at what I did" credit for another presidential run. Our students are not robots or worker ants. They are living, breathing children; each of whom has their own hopes, dreams, and desires. The state has relegated the education system to a position where educators are imprisoned by Kasich's push for teacher evaluation based on student standardized testing, which has been shown to be unreliable. By taking educational freedom and variety out of the local schools, the governor has taken the joy both from the teacher who loved to teach and the students who loved to learn. This brings me to my final point.

We listened to hours and hours of testimony last week by Ohio career center directors. I noticed one very glaring issue with each of their testimonies. Representative Kent repeatedly asked an illuminating question of several of the directors concerning what is currently stopping them from making changes to encourage alternate educational routes for students? What are the current barricades they are facing when it comes to involving and stimulating Ohio students? I have the same question. What is stopping the current system from being successful? The only answer I can come up with is the constant upheaval of the current system. Before standardized testing became the end-all-be-all of the state's educational system, Ohio was ranked 5th in the nation.

Legislators decided to increase standardized testing and base a teacher's evaluation on her students' scores. This resulted in dropping the educational rank of Ohio from 5th to 23rd. We are losing teachers, educational standing, and autonomy for school choice. It's past time for us to take legislation out of education and allow our educators; in all forums such as public schools, private schools, charter schools, and homeschools; to do what they do best. Educate and guide our children

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions that the Committee might have.