

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

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my written testimony in opposition to HB 512. My name is Brittany Alexander, and I am an educator with 21 years of experience. I urge that committee members stop this bill right here, not allowing it to see the floor of the House.

Much like HB 70 did locally in Youngstown and Lorain, HB 512 seeks to strip power from elected members of the Ohio Board of Education. These eleven individuals are our primary statewide elected representatives, outside of the General Assembly, with direct impact on educational policies. It is dangerous and unwise to render voters without a strong voice in this important agency. I understand the composition of the State Board will remain under the proposed bill, but the gutting of its authority would make our votes meaningless.

I have found the elected members of Ohio's State Board to be active, engaged, and responsive to constituents. I proudly voted for Dr. Antoinette Miranda, for example, and am thrilled to have another educator on our State Board. I have attended professional development sessions she's led, which made me eager to support her. And thanks to Nick Owens, of District 10, I am able to watch the State Board meetings on the Ohio Channel since this past October. In addition, I have received replies and phone calls from Meryl Johnson of District 11, Pat Bruns of District 4, and Stephanie Dodd of District 9 in response to concerns I've communicated to the entire Board. These elected members matter a lot.

Of note, I have never received a reply from any at-large member of the Board in response to my concerns or questions.

The State Board of Education also takes action when the General Assembly fails to do so. We have seen a recent example of this in the state's response to ECOT. The General Assembly has so far failed to pass any legislation to address failures in oversight of online education. The State Board has repeatedly demanded and voted to force repayment of funding that ECOT cannot verify. The State Board represents voters like me when they stand up for educational equity for our kids and transparency for Ohio taxpayers.

Thank you for your time and attention to these concerns. I strongly urge that the committee stop this dangerous bill in its tracks.