

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

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

There are several points I would like to make today: from the question of who are the entities behind the funding source of this bill and which industry leaders, shown as proponents of this bill, are contributing to the campaigns of the committee members advancing the bill; the question of an unelected appointee with his or her own biases running a mega-agency as an education Tsar at the pleasure of an often-changing governor; the question of the state expanding the social engineering ideals of common core beyond a push for all children to attend 4 year degree programs into "crib to workforce" social engineering pipelines for other children to fill a perceived need in the workforce; the question of why a body that was successful as a fully-elected Board became partially elected and partially appointed in the 1990s, and now because of difficulties in the current board makeup, there is a push to go back to having no elected board at all; and the question of how this changes all of education in Ohio with little time for public vetting: public, private, charter, and home education.

Concerning these issues and many more, I could write pages. But others can do that, and likely will. Instead, I would like to briefly focus on one topic.

In the March 7 hearing, we heard 2 representatives state that they had received many letters, emails, and phone calls from "worried homeschoolers", but they could find no place in this bill that impacted home education. In one instance, a representative sarcastically asked a proponent if he had found any such place, in his research of the bill. The proponent answered that he knew of no place in the bill that touched home education. The feeling given to those of us who wrote or called, was that we needn't worry our pretty little heads about such an idea. It was not in the bill, they assured.

In reading through HB 512, I found 23 specific references to 3321.04. This is the Ohio Revised Code sections upon which our home education code, administrative code sec.

3301-34, rest and amplifies. Digging in deeper, in reading through HB 512, I found 12 specific references to "home instruction".

To help educate those proponents who could not find any place in the bill that impacted home education, the following are just a few as examples (certainly not all, as I am trying to keep things brief) of those references.

Sec. 3321.04. (beginning on page 1469)

Excuses for non-attendance

"Every parent of any child of compulsory school age who is not employed under an age and schooling certificate must send such child to a school or a special education program that conforms to the minimum standards prescribed by the state board of education department of learning and achievement"

Sec. 3321.07. (Lines 43145 - 43148)

Issuing of excusals

"The ~~state board of education~~ department of learning and achievement may by rule prescribe conditions governing the issuance of excuses, which shall be binding upon the authorities empowered to issue them."

--> The above two sections are directly related to the very legal existence of home educating families, in the establishing of minimum standards and the issuing of excusals.

Sec. 3313.5312.

Extracurricular access for home educated students (beginning on page 772, specifically lines 22693 - 22697)

"(1) If the student received home instruction in the preceding grading period, the student shall meet any academic requirements established by the ~~state board of education~~ department of learning and achievement for the continuation of home instruction."

And then, the same section under which the DLA would have authority for extracurricular access (lines 22708 – 22719):

"(E) Any student who commences home instruction after the beginning of a school year and who is, at the time home instruction commences, ineligible to participate in an extracurricular activity due to failure to meet academic standards or any other requirements of the district shall not participate in the extracurricular activity under this section until the student meets the academic requirements established by the state board of education department of learning and achievement for continuation of home instruction as verified by the superintendent of the district."

--> With the passage of the Extracurricular Access law in 2013, many home educated students under OAC 3301-34 as well as "08" students decided to participate in the activities guaranteed by this bill. This directly affects the daily life of many home educated students.

Sec. 3365.02. College Credit Plus

(Lines 55372 - 55385)

"(B) Any student enrolled in a public or non public secondary school in the student's ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade; any student enrolled in a nonchartered nonpublic secondary school in the student's ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade; and any student who has been excused from the compulsory attendance law for the purpose of home instruction under section 3321.04 of the Revised Code and is the equivalent of a ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade student, may participate in the program, if the student meets the applicable eligibility criteria in section 3365.03 of the Revised Code. If a nonchartered nonpublic secondary school student chooses to participate in the program, that student shall be subject to the same requirements as a home-instructed student who chooses to participate in the program under this chapter. "

Continuing from that same section regarding College Credit Plus (Lines 55391 -55393)

"(D) The ~~chancellor~~ Director, in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code ~~and in consultation with the state superintendent~~, shall adopt rules governing the program. "

--> The College Credit Plus program is utilized by many home educating students, and as noted above, the director of the DLA will be solely responsible for adopting rules governing the program. This will affect the daily lives as well as the futures of many home educating students.

The above are just a few of the many ways that home education is directly affected by HB 512. We hope this helps to clear up any confusion on the part of proponents or sponsors of this bill who simply could not find any place that affected home education.

In closing, we ask that you do not expand the failures of Common Core into a social engineering “cradle to workforce” OR “cradle to college” pipeline. A child’s future is in the hands of the parent and the child, not the state. We who are home educators, who would be directly affected by this bill, do not want you to simply add a provision to safeguard home education. We stand with parents and educators of all school placements to urge you to vote NO on HB 512.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.