



OHIO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

A Network of Center for Christian Virtue

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Troy McIntosh and I serve as Executive Director of the Ohio Christian Education Network. Prior to that I served as a school administrator for 24 years in central Ohio, including eight at the superintendent level. I represent 140 member schools in our network and I stand in support of SB178 (Reineke) that would reform the functions and responsibilities of the State BOE and the Department of Education. The following reasons form the basis of our support.

1. **The structure of the board, and an ongoing level of dysfunction within the board, have combined to create an inefficient and too often unresponsive department.** While there are examples of excellent work being done in the department – I will note the Office of Educational Options and Collen Grady as an exception - the governance structure causes inherent barriers to operations and efficiency that even the best of its staff cannot overcome. This has manifested itself most recently in the following ways:
 - a. A poor rollout of the Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) program. A postponed opening of the student and vendor application was combined with unnecessarily cumbersome and clunky enrollment processes for both. The result was far fewer students than were projected were actually granted ACE funding and those that did receive it were extremely limited in their vendor options for usage. To respond, the GA was forced to legislate that students could rollover any funds they had received to the following year.
 - b. EdChoice Scholarship processing has been extremely slow in many cases, resulting in too many students and schools not receiving scholarship funding until well into the school year. Multiple schools that have a high percentage of EdChoice recipients have experienced significant cash flow issues as a result of being two months of more into the school year without receiving a significant portion of their funding.
 - c. Massive student transportation issues across the state that have been slow to be resolved.
 - d. An inability to manage its one constitutional task of hiring a superintendent. Many observers witnessed the board demonstrate confusion and difficulty even determining how to score the applications of search firms that applied to assist in the superintendent search.
 - e. Its inability to provide clear direction on basic questions related to children, such as “what is a boy?”, “what is a girl?”, “should teachers be sexualizing content in elementary school?” These are not political questions extraneous to its work. It



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is real response to political pressure on a radical interpretation of Title IX by the Biden administration.

2. **The bill would align the structure of the Department of Education to the style of nearly every other executive department**, in which the elected governor provides executive leadership, with assistance from a board, such as the state nursing or dental boards, with limited and specific duties related to licensure and professional conduct. Placing policy making responsibility in a cabinet-level office will streamline decision making, allowing it to be more nimble and responsive to problems and opportunities rather than the gridlock that comes from having the form a majority, let alone a consensus, from 19 different members.
3. **While opponents of the bill will claim that this is reducing the democratic representation that an elected board provides, the current structure actually serves as an unnecessary level of bureaucracy that impedes the democratic function of the executive branch.** While state board members are elected, very few Ohioans could even name a single board member, including the member elected to represent their own district. More problematic is that Ohio voters often know little about the candidates that are on the ballot. This lack of familiarity leads to elections that can be, and are, heavily influenced by money because the election will too often come down to name recognition rather than any qualifications or policy positions of the candidates. In fact, we saw just last month how influential money can be in school board elections.

Further, the current structure creates a third, and unnecessary, level of bureaucracy that bogs down the system. This layer of elected bureaucracy does not increase representation. Bureaucracy always decreases democratic representation. If electing more officials was the answer to better representation, then why not 50 more elected officials? Or 100 more? The answer is obvious, because it doesn't in the same way that these 11 elected positions does not increase representation over an elected governor. There is little about the process that results in true democratic representation by the board. Rather, the executive functions of the board should be placed directly under the democratically elected governor, whose policy positions are well-known and far more representative of the citizens of the state.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to pass the bill onto the House floor for a vote of the full body.