



Columbus Board of Education
Jennifer Adair, President

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Mission: Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Senate Bill 178 Opponent Testimony
December 13, 2022

Thank you Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 178. My name is Jennifer Adair, and I am the President of the Columbus Board of Education, representing Ohio's largest school district.

Stop attacking Public education.

Public education is a fundamental principle of democracy. Education enables our children to reach their full potential by cultivating their minds to grow in freedom of expression and thought, which allows our city, state and nation to flourish. It innovates our society and drives industry.

As a non-partisan entity, the State Board of Education's purpose is to create Ohio's education policy, safeguard academic freedom, and effectuate every child's academic success. In 1953, the People of Ohio voted to amend the State Constitution to give authority to an elected body to oversee the Ohio Department of Education. That body, the State Board of Education, is directly accountable to the People of Ohio.

This legislation leaves the future of education beholden to partisan control, not the People. Proponents suggest this change will eliminate a level of bureaucracy. Not true. It eliminates the voice of the People of Ohio in defining what is public education. The legislation eliminates having direct access to an elected representative. Instead, the People would be required to wade through the layers of a bureaucratic and partisan departmental government. This is not the representative democracy the People of Ohio chose for their education system.

Representation of voice matters if we are to strengthen Ohio's education system. Having a system of representation where all public instruction is represented — urban, rural, and suburban— is the key to ensuring Ohio's students can meet the needs of Ohio's future. For Columbus, having representation of our urban community is critically important. Something that, due to Ohio's political district line drawing, is not represented in the highest levels of our government. Stop trying to silence our children and our community.

The suggestion that this legislation serves as systemic change is not reform for the betterment of our children, nor was it reform proposed by the education experts. This "reform" is not about education, it's about power. Whoever controls education, controls our future. Right now, it is



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the People of Ohio in control. This is politics at the expense of our children. This is suppression of the People's power.

Real systemic change and reform occurs by addressing the policies, processes, and practices of Ohio's education system with a student focused agenda. For Columbus, it means addressing the continual disadvantage and restriction our students face as a result of partisan politics. It means giving each of them a fair and just opportunity to receive the education they deserve. It means allowing for their voice to be part of any reform.

I ask that you do not support this piece of legislation. It is politics. This is not democracy. This is not about the educational needs of Ohio's children.

This is a direct threat to public education, our children and our democracy.

For the children and community I represent, I demand you to vote no.

Once again, thank you Chairwoman Manning and the members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee for the opportunity to submit written opposition testimony on Senate Bill 178.

Jennifer Adair
Board of Education
President