

The Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network Sub SB 178 Testimony

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ben Cech. I am the Government Relations and Business Development Specialist at the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN). I am here today to provide testimony on Sub SB 178.

The Management Council currently sits as an interested party on this legislation, in fact, let's make that **very** interested. Our initial focus is on the timing of this bill. Sub SB 178 institutes a drastic shift in the way K-12 education is overseen in Ohio. It is MCOECN's view that a change of this magnitude should be thoroughly vetted through the legislative process to allow for public and stakeholder input. This is not because we don't believe it can be effective; it is that a 2,100-page amendment of this magnitude carries with it the possibility of many unintended consequences and externalities.

In a previous role, I served as a fellow on the Joint Education Oversight Committee. During that time, I attended every state board meeting and numerous subcommittee meetings. I was able to view how the State School Board members sought to collaborate with each other — and with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) — on various issues. Certainly, some efforts were more successful than others. Is there room for improvement? Sure. Is a complete department overhaul needed? Perhaps a little more analysis is needed.

The makeup of the board itself is unique. Constituted of both elected and appointed officials, the board is designed to be deliberative, trading off some efficiency to garner broader perspective. This can result in a more-divided board, and common goals may become more elusive. However, it is through introspective deliberation that much of our public bodies were formed and now operate. Removing an elected body, however removed or obscure, to some constituents is a significant step that merits careful consideration.

It also merits noting that there is a high level of institutional knowledge within ODE. For the MCOECN, which supports the information technology centers that support so many of the critical functions of operating schools, there is a great interest in how the EMIS and fiscal departments at ODE will be managed post transition. Anyone familiar with the EMIS system knows how intricate and vital it is for numerous day-to-day data reporting functions for districts, and for reporting the data upon which school funding is distributed. Will there be substantial change or turnover in the EMIS department? What are the systems in place to ensure a smooth transition? What we are advocating for is transparency and an opportunity both to do research on the proposed changes and to participate at the table to voice our concerns.



In closing, it is the belief of the MCOECN that such an important issue with major long-term implications should be vetted thoroughly. Discussions on how to ensure the bill accomplishes all it intends, without unintended outcomes, should enjoy the benefit of time. As this general assembly ends and a new one begins the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network stands ready to assist and help in this effort.

Chair Manning, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

