

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

Testimony of Kristen Smith Re: Sub. S.B.178

December 13, 2023

Chairwoman Manning, Vice-Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Sub. S.B. 178.

I am a homeschooling mother with a degree in art education. My husband is a public school teacher with almost two decades of classroom experience. I oppose this bill for two important reasons.

The first is that this is a massive piece of legislation that is seemingly being rushed through the legislative process during the holiday season. I have to wonder how many legislators have had the opportunity to read this bill in its entirety given its length and the busyness this season of the year presents. Education is a vital issue for our children and the state's future. Shouldn't we allow for ample time to discuss and reflect on important changes in Ohio's education law, as well as allow for Ohio parents to become fully aware of the potential changes being proposed?

My second point of opposition is that this bill removes all of our representative oversight and gives it to an entirely appointed official and agency. If our educational system needs to be improved, removing representation seems to be the worst possible method to do so. While most Ohioans may not all be able to name any State Board of Education members as some proponents have mentioned, they at least have the opportunity to voice their preferences when the time comes to vote. An elected board, even if just partially elected, allows Ohioans to have various members of the public on this important government body: former teachers, parents, grandparents, members with a background in alternative education methods (such as homeschooling or private/charter schooling), industry leaders, and more. An appointed board could easily lead to people with political connections landing positions instead of those who are deeply interested in the well-being of our children's educational options and success.

Please do not bring this piece of legislation to the House for a full vote so that we can keep representation on our State Board of Education. There are better ways to improve our educational system.

Thank you.