



To Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Ohio House Primary & Secondary Education Committee:

Public Education Partners (PEP) strongly opposes the takeover of the State School Board of Ohio and views it as a policy that, by design, will take away the rights of Ohio voters pertaining to education issues. In 2015, the Ohio Legislature passed another state takeover law called HB 70 without careful consideration and expert guidance from public education stakeholders. That failed state takeover plan was a piece of ideological legislation that passed in the middle of the night, and now many of the same legislators are rushing to pass a state takeover of the State School Board.

State takeovers are often found to be undemocratic and unaccountable, and therefore unacceptable. We see this state takeover as undemocratic, because it will take power away from 11 publicly elected school board members. This takeover will give unaccountable bureaucrats unlimited control of our schools. A state takeover of the school board through SB 178 is unacceptable, because giving most of the State BOE duties to the governor's office will guarantee that political interests will be served at the expense of Ohio school children and their parents.

Currently, decisions made by members of the State Board of Education are crucial to every Ohioan. Board members create academic standards and definitions, approve curriculum, and establish test benchmarks. The Board sets the policy direction for public schools and establishes policies concerning charter schools, vouchers, professional development, educational licenses, and more. Much like this committee, the state school board is focused on primary and secondary education in our great state.

Because of the State Board's influence, it's very important to have members who are true advocates for public education. Our elected state school board members serve the will of their constituents- they are not selected to serve at the pleasure of the Governor's political party, which isn't always friendly to public education. The State Board of Education is a non-partisan organization, but the decisions now made by the state board under the current duties of that office would be guided by partisan political power over K-12 education.

What a travesty if this Senate policy (SB 178) is allowed to incapacitate the state

BOE's authority and award it to cabinet members most likely appointed by political favor. America's representative democracy is the best way for Ohioans to address accountability and oversight of our government leaders to make sure that they promote sound education policies that follow the will of the people and not the interests of education profiteers.

In 1953, Ohio voters passed a constitutional amendment that established an all-elected state board of education and a superintendent of public instruction to be appointed by that board, which indicated an intention to separate the Department of Education from the governor's office.

If the perceived notion is that the BOE is now dysfunctional, then Ohio needs to return to an all-elected state school board using legitimate district maps that are not politically gerrymandered.

Now is not the time to rush through with a takeover, because the public has had very little access to the full 2,100-page document. Public education stakeholders only saw the text recently, even though the head of the Ohio Christian Education Network revealed during his testimony that he had access to the full document weeks ago. Much of the massive bill's 2,100+ pages regard the renaming of ODE to become the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, but Sen. Reineke claims that the "substantive structure" of the bill takes up less than 20 pages. How can your constituents trust that this is so with such a heavy-handed push to rush this bill through in 2022? What else may be lurking within that huge document?

The PEP Board also has many concerns about the bill's aims, the impact of the education overhaul on federal programs, and how the department should balance education and career tech.

Ohio politicians must not circumvent the will of the people with this fast-moving piece of legislation. If you do, your constituents can all say GOODBYE to the accountability and oversight of Ohio education issues guaranteed by the power of the vote.

Please REJECT the takeover of ODE and the State School Board of Ohio.

Thank you for your service!

Jeanne Melvin and the
Board of Public Education Partners