



**December 6, 2022**  
**Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee**  
**SB 178 Opponent Testimony**  
**Presented by Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers**

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Committee members, I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 178. We have concerns with the content of this policy and with its timing and process.

Public education should not be a partisan issue. Across Ohio, millions of students, parents, and families depend on our public schools and on the work of teachers, paraprofessionals, intervention specialists, counselors, social workers, nurses, speech language therapists, and other educators. Public school employees and public school families can be found across the political spectrum.

The composition of the State Board of Education, which has a majority of members elected by the public in non-partisan elections, is a statement that despite our many differences, we can come to the table to collaboratively support Ohio's students and schools. The remainder of the Board, eight positions appointed by the Governor and affirmed by the Senate, allows Ohio's chief executive to have a considerable voice in education policy.

This balance of directly elected and appointed members serves the Board well and leads to collaborative decision making. We oppose this legislation because it would strip the State Board of Education from most of its current responsibilities and would place too much control over Ohio's schools in the hands of the Governor.

As educators, we are only able to do our best work when there is a broad, non-partisan consensus among policymakers supporting the essential mission of public schools, to advance education and opportunity for Ohio's students. Passing SB 178 would increase the partisan rancor over education policy and that would be detrimental to our students' success.

Aside from this fundamental disagreement over the policy, we also object to the timing and rushed process of this bill. This bill only gained supportive momentum after this year's election, when progressive candidates for the Board of Education won seats on the Board. We would hope that legislators would respond to the results of that election by examining why the message of the newly elected Board members resonated with voters from Akron to Toledo to Cincinnati, and how the legislature and the Board can work together to improve our schools.

This bill proposes placing more power in the executive branch, which will silence the public's voice, access, and transparency regarding education policymaking. Additionally, an

implementation date of July 1, 2023 seems like a heavy lift for these changes to occur without a comprehensive discussion.

I urge the Committee not to pass this bill, and I trust that the Department and the Board will swiftly address the concerns raised by the Committee. Any changes that you feel are necessary to the State Board of Education can be dealt with in the next General Assembly rather than in this hectic, short lame duck session.