

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 178
Dr. Jim Lloyd, Superintendent for the Olmsted Falls City School District
Primary and Secondary Education Committee
December 6, 2022

To Senate Majority Leader Huffman, Senator Reineke, and Primary and Secondary Education Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing me to provide my written testimony. My name is Jim Lloyd and I am a public school educator of 28 years—all of which have been in our great state. I have served as a school psychologist, a Director of Special Education, an Assistant Superintendent in charge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and most recently, I've been superintendent of schools for the past 10 years in Olmsted Falls City Schools within Cuyahoga County. I am a registered member of the majority party.

During my 28 years of service, I have seen the State School Board, Ohio Department of Education and State Superintendent's Office be very effective, and I have also witnessed them struggle. I would add that the struggles I've witnessed from these groups have mostly occurred during the past 10 years. I believe these struggles and ineffectiveness have been directly related to the changes in our political landscape and, more specifically, how politically tribal and polarized our state has become.

As a school superintendent of 10 years and a public educator for 28, I have very serious concerns for Senator Bill Reineke's SB 178 proposal. It leaves the current structures in place as required by the Ohio Constitution, but it removes any real power that any group might be able to wield (i.e. the State School Board, Department of Education and State Superintendent). By shifting all educational decision making power to a Governor appointed "cabinet-level agency," educational decisions, and our direction for education in the state become subject to whoever holds the political power. Continuity of vision and mission will be sacrificed.

While I certainly understand the desire to make organizations run more efficiently, a massive restructuring of this nature needs to be carefully considered, debated and deliberated upon. The current party of power has a supermajority and with it, the ability to push a single minded, and very politically motivated agenda. School districts and education in general must be non-partisan. It is why local board members do not declare a political party. The jobs of local board members and central office administrators are to advocate for ALL children who live within our communities and we do this in the absence of political agendas.

Aside from the bill's content, I am very concerned about its timing and the attempt to fast-track it through the legislature during lame duck. I believe Ohio's educational system to be very bureaucratic and intertwined. The State Legislators are partially responsible for this and if there is a desire to untangle the bureaucracy, it must be done precisely, intentionally and in a bipartisan manner.

I strongly urge you to vote **NO** on SB 178, and reject any attempts to attach its language as an amendment to another bill. Moreover, if it is the desire to reform the educational infrastructure related to policy and help those of us in the field, I would strongly urge you to take the time to carefully study different models, be thoughtful in your approach and include educators who have experience.

Thank you,
Dr. Jim Lloyd, Superintendent for Olmsted Falls City Schools