



Education

Testimony on SB 178 before the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee of the Ohio Senate:

We represent Policy Matters Ohio, a non-partisan, not-for-profit research organization that is building a more vibrant, equitable, sustainable and inclusive Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 178.

As advocates for sustainable and equitable opportunities for all Ohioans regardless of their zip code or what they look like, we believe that a strong education is the foundation of a functioning democracy. Senate Bill 178 would weaken that foundation.

The State Board has worked diligently to engage families and other stakeholders as it sets policy and guidance for local public schools. By shifting most policymaking power from the State Board of Education to the governor's office, Senate Bill 178 would remove much of the accountability currently built into the system, allowing policymakers to operate largely behind closed doors.

Ohio's public schools are charged with helping our children learn, grow, develop, and thrive. They can best accomplish this when parents, educators and students have say over the decisions made about public education. Debate and discussion are what democracy is about, especially when you bring together people from so many different backgrounds. That diversity shows up in the State Board of Education, but disagreement is not a justification to undermine the democratic power of the State Board.

There is always room for improvement and there are many challenges to be addressed in public education, particularly in how we plan to fund our schools in the upcoming budget and beyond. The legislature would better serve the public by ensuring every school has the resources it needs to provide each student with the opportunity and tools they need to succeed. Changing governance won't help us meet these challenges.

Finally, this kind of far-reaching governance change shouldn't be pushed through in lame duck. It should be developed through inclusive, deep dialogue that brings diverse voices to the table.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have at 216.361.9801.