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Aviation and Aerospace
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Sarah Fowler Arthur
State Representative

Chairman Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

House Bill 235 seeks to address what I believe to be a serious omission of transparency and accountability in the recent shift of responsibilities from the Ohio Department of Education to the new Department of Education and Workforce – namely that the State Board of Education (or ODE/DEW) would no longer hold monthly public forums for testimony on the education rules and regulations affecting K-12 education in the state of Ohio.

Under previous law, the State Board of Education, whose make-up was determined by the General Assembly, was required to hold public hearings on the MANY operating rules and regulations for K-12 education: education standards, licensure qualifications, assessment requirements, and teacher ratios, to name a few examples. During my eight years as an elected member of the board, we typically heard ten to thirty rules during each monthly public hearing – equaling 240-300 rules per year.

With the changes in the law, there is no longer a requirement for a public hearing with testimony on each rule, however, none of these rules were eliminated. Instead, the responsibility to create, review, and authorize new and existing rules now falls to an unelected, bureaucratic agency process. While many (if not most) Ohio agencies DO have public hearings and accept testimony, there tend to be more layers of bureaucracy for people to wade through when trying to figure out how, when, and where to testify than under the previous transparent system.

The intent of the proposed bill is three fold – 1) to address this most important transparency and accountability issue by requiring the State Board of Education to hold a monthly public meeting, with an opportunity for public testimony, on any proposed rule changes from the DEW, 2) to require the State Board of Education to post the public testimony submitted in a transparent manner on a public website, as well as in a report to the DEW Director, and 3) to ensure public accountability with an all elected, partisan, State Board of Education, gradually phased-in along congressional districts as current board memberships expire.

The bill does not affect any of the other roles and responsibilities of the new Department of Education and Workforce or of the State Board of Education.

This bill will ensure that every constituent has a transparent and clearly defined way to offer their comments on rules and regulations affecting K-12 education that could otherwise slide under the radar. Constituents will also have accountability through the elected State Board of Education members whose primary obligation under this bill would be to hear, record, and accurately

present the testimony received by the public on each rule. Both transparency and accountability will be supported through the DEW maintaining a public website recording the public testimony and I am confident that this will ensure the highest level of quality control for the students, parents, and educators that we serve across the great State of Ohio.

This will enable an official forum where the citizens, voters, teachers, and parents, may air their concerns and suggestions, which is a bedrock principle of our constitutional republic.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Fowler Arthur". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur