

Opposing Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Jacqueline Peck, Voter
Education Committee
February 21, 2023

Chairman Andrew Brenner, Senator Bill Reineke, and members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, My name is Jacqueline Peck. I am a retired teacher living in Kent OH and have not missed voting in an election since my year of majority in 1969. I am active in my faith community and read broadly and communicate with my elected state officials on a regular basis. I testify today to express my deep concerns that Senate Bill 1 moves critical public education decisions from our democratically-elected State Board of Education and puts them into the hands of partisan politics.

Throughout my teaching career that spanned the northeast quadrant of Ohio I have sat side by side students of all ages—pre-school through adult—all abilities, all economic levels, and a variety of first languages. I have watched them learn and listened to them make sense of their learning. For example, I have heard first graders in Cleveland speak in their family dialect and yet write and spell in standard English. This is quite a teaching-learning process for one so young. A similar process is used in Holmes county as Amish students navigate their German and English usage. In the affluent Hudson and Beachwood schools I have listened as the incorporation of family international travel is expected to be integrated into learning. Adults who could once earn a living wage without a high literacy level tell me they find that opportunity gone; even warehouse workers now need to pass a detailed written test to drive a tow-motor.

One thing I can say for certain is that students differ widely and their parents and teachers together make the best decisions about their learning. This is why a democratically-elected State Board of Education that represents these differing students, their families, and their communities is needed to effectively address students' differing needs and priorities. An appointee of the governor cannot bring the many unique perspectives of Ohio's differing communities to public education decisions of content and policy. Further, the currently elected education leaders serve as nonpartisan officers. Yet Senate Bill 1 blatantly embeds partisan politics into public education by putting critical decisions—of content, funding, and operation—into the hands of the Governor and Legislature, and without appropriate accountability and oversight.

In summary, an appointee from a governor simply cannot have the varied personal knowledge and respect of learning in Ohio's varied communities to successfully implement the duties now enacted by the democratically-elected nonpartisan state board. Senate Bill 1 removes my voice and the different voices of voters in communities across Ohio from any consideration of effective learning for their students. I respect those varied voices. I am outraged that some state legislators are attempting to silence those voices by promoting an anti-democratic bill under the guise of efficiency.

I ask the you please consider my testimony and the anti-democratic element of Senate Bill 1. I ask that you remove from the bill the replacement of an elected nonpartisan board with a governor partisan appointee. Thank you.

