

Thank you, Chairman Brenner, members of the Education committee.

My name is Tom Jackson, currently, I am an elected member of the State Board of Education, representing over 1 million Ohioans from the great counties of Geauga, Summit and Cuyahoga, making up District 10.

I was elected to serve under the current independent operational model of the State Board of Education and the Department of Education and, with all due respect, I'm here today to speak in opposition to the overreach outlined in Senate Bill 1.

The voters spoke to educational independence from the Legislative & the Executive branch and passed a citizen-led constitutional amendment establishing an independent State Board. In fairness, if you'd like to challenge the citizens on that, the legislature should ask the citizens to change the state constitution.

To be fair, most people would not take guidance from education leaders how to run a business, so why take guidance from business leaders on how to run education.

Ohioans know that their local mayor doesn't run the local schools. They know that public services and public education can and should function independently, both at the local and state level.

Most people wouldn't ask education leaders to run the political system, why have political leaders run your education system.

Let's take politics out of the classroom and let teachers teach and students learn.

If you're concerned about tax-payer accountability and spending on education, I would encourage you to hold all recipients of public funds to the same financial disclosure and oversight that you have established for public schools. Public school systems are accountable to local property taxpayers, state Sunshine Laws, financial disclosures, and Department of Education oversight. Yet, the other OH school systems that receive public funds, whether charter, religious, private or homeschooled are not held to the same standards.

If you're concerned about parental choice, I would encourage you to hold all recipients of public funds to the same student outcomes, professional conduct and test-taking so

that as parents, we can assess our choices, do the proper analysis and make legitimate comparisons based on comparable data sets, not marketing.

If you're concerned about the educational outcomes of our students and how our educational systems benefit Ohio's children, more bureaucracy is not the answer. Having politicians run our schools instead of education professionals and locally elected representatives is not the answer.

The answer is best found with the 100's of people and the 1000's of hours that went into creating the strategic plan for Ohio schools. There's something that Ohio businesses and educators have in common, using strategic plans to guide us. Why abandon that – we should instead, double down on the Whole Child framework and put our energy into achieving those goals.

I represent over 1M Ohioans. I have 46 school districts. They are not asking for a take over the Ohio Department of Education by the Executive or Legislative branch. I'll tell you what I hear:

Why not pass a constitutional funding model for education that all meet the needs of students across Ohio.

Why claim significant problems with our educational system yet put 100's of millions of dollars into a raining day fund. It's the rain that's leaking into our old school buildings and destroying the facilities. I've got school buildings that are over 100 years old with no air conditioning and heating systems so old that if they break down, there's no parts or people to fix them.

Why scapegoat others for the teacher shortage, bus driver shortage, the funding shortage when you have the resources to hold these hearings and create a new bureaucracy but not to fix the current problems.

Why is it always someone else's fault. You have the bully pulpit, you have the purse strings, you have the super majority. 25 years ago, Ohio's educational system was ranked 5th nationally, now we're 34th. Ohio could be a leader in education, its leaders have chosen not to. I ask the committee members to vote no on SB1.