

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and committee members, my name is Christina Collins, and I am an elected member of the State Board of Education since January 1, 2021. I am also a mother, community volunteer, foster parent, adjunct professor, and I run a countywide workforce development program for students at risk of not graduating.

I would like to say I represent the 8 counties in Northeast Ohio and the 225,871 voters who originally elected me to my seat; however, as this committee may know, I was redistricted entirely out of my district and home county to represent areas near central Ohio. This created confusion for both me and other members of the board as well as Ohio's voters through most of 2022.

But confusion has been a recent cornerstone in Ohio politics, and Senate Bill 1 aims to perpetuate and create more confusion with an added and unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. Ohio is and should remain a local control state where decisions about what and how to teach are made in partnership between local schools and their communities. Current representatives on the State Board of Education have repeatedly demonstrated their staunch support for protecting local control while serving as the rule-making body for Ohio education and implementing the never-ending onslaught of initiatives sent forth from Ohio's legislature.

That is an important statement: the never-ending onslaught of initiatives sent forth from Ohio's legislature. These constant attempts to "improve" public education have amounted to piles of initiatives afforded little time to implement with no actual benchmarks for success other than edicts to "improve achievement!" and condemnation when change doesn't happen fast enough. Just in my 15 years in education, I've seen and led districts through many initiatives both state and federal all aimed at "improving schools". We've had new standards, new assessments, new evaluation systems for teachers and administrators, new teacher residency programs, new retention laws for third graders, new health topics (but no health standards), new budget line items, and local board and leadership takeovers. These were all legislated efforts, but you're still saying our schools are failing? I ask, who holds this Assembly accountable when the unending educational initiatives it doles out do not work?

Perhaps the problem isn't education. Perhaps it's legislation. Legislation that confuses and burdens, making education more complicated and passing blame around like a shell game.

When Senate Bill 178 began picking up speed in November, momentum was built around rhetoric claiming the State Board wasn't moving fast enough and student achievement was improving too slowly. And yet, I have not heard a single specific, explicit answer as to how subverting Ohio's voters to create a new executive department will speed things up. In fact, it will instead stall Ohio's educational efforts as a result of confusion.

Instead of continuing down this path, I ask that you work with the State Board of Education to continue our efforts around our priorities: literacy, workforce development, and accelerating learning. As the Chair of the Literacy and Learning Acceleration Committee, I invite you to attend our meetings, see the work our committee is doing in partnership with OERC to better Ohio's schools. We are working with urgency to determine 1) What we are doing, 2) Is it working, and 3) How do we know?

There is always room for improvement in procedures and practices, especially within governmental bodies; let us focus together on doing that. Once again, we are losing precious time lost in confusion and legislative efforts when we should be laser-focused on working together for Ohio's children.