

Opponent Testimony for SB 1 submitted by Laura Rushton, citizen, to the Education Committee meeting on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Laura Rushton. I am a retired elementary school teacher who has taught in both public and private schools in Ohio in Columbus and Richland County. I have a Master's degree from the Ohio State University. I also served for 7 years on the board of Foundation Academy, a Mosaica charter school in Mansfield. I currently volunteer at a local elementary school.

As an educator and an advocate, I strongly oppose the changes proposed in SB 1, which transfers the most of the functions of the State Board of Education to the Governor's cabinet. Creating such an agency, the proposed Department of Education and Workforce, would politicize decisions that should be made with input from experienced educators. Our public schools are vital to the health of our state; they must be fully supported in order to create engaged citizens who will have the tools to make decisions, run businesses, enter the workforce, raise families, obey laws, and participate in our democracy. For far too long, we have had an unconstitutional system of funding that has finally been addressed by the legislature. It is essential that we invest in public schools. Transferring control of educational oversight to the governor's cabinet will make it much too easy to base those decisions on political factors that fail to prioritize the needs of students (especially those whose choices are limited by where they live.)

My own wide-ranging teaching experience has shown me that the closer one is to the classroom, the better one understands how important it is to meet children where they are, building relationships and partnerships with parents and support staff. The governor's office is too far removed from the classroom to do that effectively. Political considerations will invariably prevail, ignoring the needs of children who are at risk (for many different reasons, including poverty, disability, and drug addicted or incarcerated parents).

I urge you to defer to dedicated teachers and administrators and parents who understand that children are worth far more than items on a budget spreadsheet. Please keep our State Board of Education independent and trust the will of the people who elected their members in good faith.

Thank you for your time.