

Testimony before OH Senate – 2-22-23

I am here to ask that you withdraw SB1. It is a fundamental assault on democracy and on the ability of Ohioans to live up to their responsibility to participate in the democratic process.

We have an elected State School Board. We elect them from regions of the state so that power is not concentrated at the top and indeed, regional differences are reflected in the make-up -and *decisions*- of this board. It has represented the spectrum of Ohioans well. It is a model of local control worked through state policy. There is no indication that it needs to be fixed.

I think it is fair to say that Ohioans do not like government bureaucracy or undue power going from their hands into the hands of the already powerful. This is true whether they be Republicans or Democrats but it is *particularly true* of Republicans and of Republican philosophy. A bigger, more politicized, more centralized 'Department of Education and Workforce' whose power derives from the theft of the jurisdiction of the regionally elected representatives is no one's idea of a good move. It is especially repugnant to those advocates of 'local control' whose ranks are filled with Republicans. Concentrating power in the hands of those that already wield so much is a direct assault on the time-worn Republican belief in local control, the separation of powers and, above all, small government.

You insult the voters who just last November elected new members of the state school board. *They represent us; they are accountable to the voters*, not some bureaucracy headed by the Governor in Columbus.

I ask you: What expertise do state legislators have in the field of education? While some of you may have been teachers and some may have a particular interest in education, nowhere in the job description of elected state legislators is any educational expertise required. Who are you to take away the power of those who specifically ran for the state school board and who specifically won the approval of the voters to do the job of overseeing Ohio's schools?

Merging public education with 'Workforce' [a catchall term if ever there was one] diminishes the importance of education in a state that needs so much more of it. The founders viewed **Education** as the **Cornerstone of Democracy**. Indeed democracy fails when education fails. This means that education is central., basic., and necessary for each and every citizen. Surely with all the departments in the state bureaucracy, education warrants its own, not watered down or diminished by the vague term 'workforce.'

SB1 makes no sense. There is no need for it. The only possible explanation for it is that ideologues in charge in Columbus want to belittle the centrality of education in this state and to toss the future of our children around cavalierly like a football in a pick-up game.

As I'm sure you're aware, Ohio ranks very high among states whose citizens do NOT attend and graduate college. Secondary schools therefore take on an importance in Ohio -especially rural Ohio- that they do not share in states that make higher education more feasible. Over 90% of our children attend public schools and for most of them that is the end of their formal education. This is to say that **Public Secondary Education is a Big Deal in Ohio** and we cannot afford to mess it up – or in any way diminish its importance to & FOR Ohioans.

Public Education is not the OK Corral. Our children are not a football to be idly tossed around in a pick-up game. People who make it their life's work to educate our children deserve your respect. They receive special training to do so and many accumulate years of experience owing to their extraordinary dedication.

Legislators should stay out of the business of running our schools.

If you care about Ohio's children, if you care about the future that they will have to navigate with their high school degrees, then you have no choice but to withdraw this bill and the several others before you, all of which diminish public education and make a mockery of the tireless efforts of those experts in the field to provide our children -and consequently OHIO- with a future.

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