

Testimony on Senate Bill 1
Senate Education Committee

Submitted by:
Deborah Cooper

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 1.

I am an Ohio resident, a voter, and a former educator who has taught at all grade levels from kindergarten through 12th grade, as both a full-time and a substitute teacher in public and private schools. I have also raised three sons, all of whom attended public schools, and two of my grandchildren attend public schools in Ohio.

While I believe parents should be able to choose how they wish to educate their children, public school funding should not suffer for it. A robust public education system is absolutely essential for any sort of democracy to work. We badly need informed citizens who can think critically.

Right now, parents or school districts with problems or concerns can speak with an elected official, and can hold that official accountable. If SB 1 passes, only an appointed official will oversee education. Where is the accountability? We've already endured the ECOT scandal, and how many families suffered so that greedy people could make money at their expense? Given the refusal of the legislature to completely repeal HB 6, despite the fact that Ohio taxpayers continue to be robbed, it seems to me that putting even more power in the hands of the state and diminishing local control is not only undemocratic, but opens the door to even more corruption.

If SB 1 passes, an administration with little to no background in education will be in charge. Currently, at least SOME Board members are elected on a non-partisan basis, and expertise and experience in education is a big factor in determining who is elected. The governor already appoints eight members to the Board; in my view, ALL Board members should be elected in a working democracy.

To blame the Board for a decline in our state's performance in education is disingenuous. There are many factors at play, not least of which is the long delay in providing for appropriate funding. If SB 1 is passed, along with a voucher plan that would take money from public education, and a reduction of state and local taxes, how can we expect to provide a public education system that serves ALL Ohioans?

Please think twice about lending your support to SB 1, and say no.

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