

Good afternoon Chair Brenner and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in opposition of SB1.

Participation in education, as is, is not the most accessible. To be very personal and transparent, knowing how to write testimony and how to sign up was difficult to navigate but I am thankful that I have supportive peers who are willing to help me further grow my understanding of the process, as well as very quick responses from the Ohio Senate office. I find this relevant because I find this example closely related to education policy in Ohio and it leads me to wonder- if one meeting and one bill is hard to fully understand, how do we explain to students, parents, and multiple community partners that their already limited access will potentially only get narrower as time goes on if SB1 were to pass?

The State Board of Education, to my own personal understanding, serves as a direct liaison from the public to the State. I recognize that each district has a unique set of needs and the State Board is tasked with the difficult but very important task of coming together to determine a solution that benefits the scholars of Ohio. A pivotal highlight for my academic career was watching the State Board of Education meet through a livestream. It is at this moment that I saw my home District State Board member truly represent the needs of our schools and community. The representation, to this extent, where each district sees their representatives share their community's unique needs will not effectively exist under SB1. I would like to echo a statement from Lalitha Pamidigantam, Advocacy Manager from YWCA Columbus, "*We believe that the answers lie in making structural changes to voter accessibility, and providing support to the existing State Board members with training, evaluation, updated practices and processes, and other ways to ease the nebulous nature of the board.*" I highlight this statement because solutions for education should be approached collaboratively through all levels of government. Additionally, the public deserves full transparency and their votes to matter. I urge you to put Ohioans first and demonstrate that you care about their voice.

Thank you,  
Johana