

135th General Assembly
Ohio Senate Education Committee
February 28, 2023
Senate Bill 1 - Opponent Testimony
Jeanne Ogden

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony today in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

My name is Jeanne Ogden. My husband and I were born and raised in Ohio. We raised three children here.

Our children, who experienced learning disabilities and challenges, have attended Catholic, charter, and public schools. We have had to fight for accommodations in every school they attended. Advocacy is something I am familiar with. Success in advocacy depends on three things.

1. The time and determination to find out what your child's rights are in education.
2. The exact wording of rules, policies, and laws governing your child's rights.
3. The person sitting across the table from you.

I have a transgender daughter, and I was caught up in the months-long mess at the State Board of Education last fall, which was sparked by a proposed Resolution that denied trans children exist. We were able to work with all 19 voting members of the Board. The fact that the people sitting across the table from us were accessible and accountable to their voters helped us. The final language was less harmful, but the Resolution ultimately passed.

Voters were not happy about the passage of this Resolution or the controversy surrounding it.

Before November 8, seven elected Republicans and four elected Democrats sat on the Board. After November 8, it flipped. The 2023 BOE has seven elected Democrats and four elected Republicans. The people of Ohio voted in a Democratic-majority led State Board of Education.

Then the Governor used his statutory power to appoint eight Republicans. Zero Democrats.

If you vote for SB 1, and it becomes law, I am concerned that the people sitting across the table from me in the future will not be as fair or balanced in their views or priorities. I fear the Governor will not use his power over education wisely. I respectfully ask that you consider that. Who will look out for our children?

It won't be our elected state representatives and senators who only have the power to pass state laws that were never designed as a vehicle to manage the details and nuances of school function.

Departmental public hearing testimony will not be weighed by 19 voting members from diverse parts of the state. That testimony will be weighed by one person—the Director. The House can overrule him, but that means depending upon representatives who we did not elect to handle educational matters.

JCARR public hearings are only used to determine if a proposed policy or rule is legal and doesn't unduly hamper business interests.

So, I ask you again, who will be looking for every unique child at a new DEW? Who do we go to with our concerns who has some power to make a difference?

I urge you to take time to consider these issues and find a way to address them before moving an entire department and the lives of almost two million children under the control of one person. Vote no on SB 1.