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February 27, 2023

**SB 1 Testimony to the Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Opposition Testimony**

Thank you Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Education Committee for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony against Senate Bill 1.

My name is Leah Winsberg, and I am a Staff Attorney with the Children's Law Center, Inc. Children's Law Center, Inc. (CLC), established in 1989, is a non-profit legal service center protecting the rights of children and youth to help them overcome barriers and transition into adulthood, better advocate for their needs, and successfully contribute to society. As an organization that is committed to protecting the rights of children and improving the systems that serve them, I offer this testimony in opposition to proposed legislation SB 1, which will impact students throughout Ohio.

For over 15 years, I have worked with children and youth and advocated for child policy and practice improvements in education, child welfare, and justice systems. All children are entitled to obtain a free and appropriate public education and CLC strives to ensure access to education regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status or disability. Research clearly demonstrates that primary education increases the potential for productive employment and career achievement. As such, we promote educational programming which is strength-based and provides appropriate developmental, social, behavioral, and academic supports.

SB 1 proposes a significant shift in the way that education is overseen and supported in Ohio and fails to address gaps necessary for positively impacting student success.

**SB 1 seeks an anti-democratic approach to critical education policy.** The legislation proposes renaming the Ohio Department of Education as the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and would move many of the roles of the State Board of Education to a cabinet-level position within the Governor's office. SB 1 would put the Governor – and cabinet members appointed by political favor – in charge of education policy in Ohio.

**SB 1 removes citizen engagement, transparency, accountability, and access over education.** SB 1 proposes removing transparency and public collaboration by shifting responsibility and oversight to a Governor-appointed cabinet-level agency, where decision-making would take place behind closed doors. Board of Education meetings and deliberations are public, and communities have opportunities for input on rule making and other decisions, offering Ohioans a fair and accessible method to elevate needs relevant to local districts. Ohio's students, their families, and communities deserve this type of intentional collaboration, transparency, and public oversight and accountability.

**SB 1 fails to provide needed guardrails for home education.** SB 1 proposes loosening oversight, rules, and regulations around non-chartered, nonpublic schools and the homeschooling system. Oversight of student spaces is critical, especially those that threaten to proliferate discrimination against Ohio students along lines of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, or disability. Ohio should strive to create education systems that are safe and inclusive.

Indeed, the goal of ensuring that students are prepared to enter the workforce is commendable. Yet, SB 1 removes transparency, local citizen engagement and input, and critical guardrails for homeschooling—none of which help increase student success within or beyond K-12 education. The State Board of Education should be encouraged and supported in proposing measures that improve student outcomes, well-being, and address critical and historical disparities in absenteeism, exclusionary discipline, and literacy. Our students, educators, and schools face significant challenges, and we know our school districts need support. We need adequate and equitable funding; strategies to attract and retain quality educators; and sufficient resources to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. SB 1 fails to address these issues.

CLC believes that all youth regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, geographic origin or economic status must have access to education programming which provides meaningful benefit. Ohio can support a vision of education that addresses existing barriers to student success within and beyond K-12 education, however, that cannot be accomplished with SB 1. Accordingly, I urge you to vote no on SB 1.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Ohio's children and youth.

*/s/ Leah R. Winsberg*

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