



## TESTIMONY ON PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

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Ohio Senate Education Committee

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Chairman Brenner and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 8. My name is Beau Euton, and I am testifying on behalf of Opportunity Solutions Project. OSP is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that seeks to enhance individuals' paths to self-sufficiency.

There are nearly 1.6 million young people enrolled in Ohio's public schools.<sup>1</sup> Across the country, students have been thrown into an education crisis, driven by activists and bureaucrats, that will have a permanent impact on their future success.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, often known as the "nation's report card" has shown that nine-year-olds' math and reading scores are down since 2020.<sup>2</sup> Math scores are down for the first time ever in five decades.<sup>3</sup> Reading scores are down by the largest amount in three decades.<sup>4</sup>

The results are not only staggering, but they also have real impact on students' lives. It is estimated that, using Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the typical high school-educated worker will earn \$40,000 less per decade now because of the failure of our education system.<sup>5</sup> It is clear our schools have spent too long focusing on what's politically trendy rather than the basic skills every student needs to achieve the American Dream.

We fail our students when we take decisions away from those who are best positioned to make them: parents.

At OSP, we believe when parents do what they think is best for their children, those children will succeed. In other words, the classroom is no replacement for the family. Education shouldn't be about making choices for anyone—it is about empowering students and parents to make the best choices for themselves.

### **What this bill does for Ohio's students, parents, and education system**

HB 8 accomplishes two things: It guarantees parents have fundamental rights to guide their children's education and well-being and it makes Ohio's education system transparent to families.

*Parental Rights:* This bill recognizes that parents have fundamental rights over the development and education of their children, and it makes clear that the state will not infringe upon those rights. This includes the right to know what their child is taught; the right to access health and educational records pertaining to their child; and the right to protect their child from sexually explicit instructional materials.

*Transparency and Accountability:* In addition to notifying parents of these rights, school districts would be required to work with parents, teachers, and administrators to develop policies to increase parental involvement; to make curricula transparent; to give parents a procedure for objecting to sexually explicit curricula they might disagree with, and to notify parents of any changes in their child's services or monitoring related to their mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being. The bill also requires school districts to notify parents that they have the fundamental right to make decisions concerning their child's upbringing and education.

### **Why this is important for Ohio families**

Protecting parents' rights is the best first step in getting students back on track for success. When families are at the center of a child's education, they have the most opportunity for lifelong prosperity and happiness.

Compared to other states working on this specific issue, it is a much lighter lift for a great reward: Parents will be empowered with the information and recourse they need to guide their children's future.

Thank you for your time today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> “Public Education in Ohio,” Ballotpedia (2023)[https://ballotpedia.org/Public\\_education\\_in\\_Ohio](https://ballotpedia.org/Public_education_in_Ohio).

<sup>2</sup> “Reading and mathematics scores decline during COVID-19 pandemic,” National Assessment of Educational Progress (2022), <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltt/2022/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Michael R. Strain, “America’s Education Emergency,” American Enterprise Institute (2022), <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/americas-education-emergency/>.