

12/8/24

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today against SB 295. My name is Michelle Leasor. I am a 24-year veteran educator in Ohio's public K-12 schools and a parent of four school-aged children in public schools. I am strongly opposed to SB 295. My teaching experience has been primarily in urban school districts where many of my students lack access to the support systems they need to succeed. SB 295 targets school districts that do not meet a yearly performance index. As most of us in education know, a performance index is a measure of certain criteria, including attendance rates, standardized test scores, and so on. **Lower income school districts in urban and rural communities often have lower performance indices as compared to wealthier suburban districts, making those lower income districts subject to the harmful effects of SB 295.**

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and rushed bill, Senate Bill 295. This legislation threatens to undermine the role of local school boards, parents, and educators in shaping the education system to meet the unique needs of their communities. It is critical that we allow ample time for public consideration and input before making such sweeping decisions that will directly impact the future of Ohio's public education system.

This bill is deeply concerning because **SB 295 strips local control from elected school board members and parents.** For decades, local boards have been best positioned to understand the needs of their specific districts and to make decisions based on their unique student populations. By removing this control, SB 295 would impose top-down mandates that fail to account for local needs. **The voices of those most directly impacted—teachers, parents, and community leaders—would be silenced in favor of bureaucratic decisions made far from the classrooms where real learning takes place.** We should not be passing major pieces of legislation without a full, open, and transparent process that allows for thoughtful review and input from those who will bear the consequences.

Additionally, **SB 295 bill would limit parents' rights to choose the best school for their child.** Parents are their children's first and most important advocates, and they know best when it comes to selecting educational opportunities that will benefit their child's individual needs. Removing their right to make these choices in favor of a one-size-fits-all approach imposed by the state is an unacceptable overreach. The state should not be making such significant, closed-door decisions without community involvement, and it is crucial that we pause and allow the time and space needed for thorough public debate.

I strongly urge you to vote NO on this bill and protect local control, parental rights, and the well-being of Ohio's students.

Thank you.

Michelle Leasor