



State Representative Beth Lear

House District 61

State Representative Thomas Hall

House District 46

House General Government Committee

HB 153 Testimony

REP. LEAR: Chair Ray, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the General Government committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 153, legislation that would require candidates running for local school boards to declare and file under a political party affiliation, just as is required for most other elected offices in our state.

This bill is rooted in a simple principle: **transparency and accountability to the voters**. As we've seen in recent years, school boards are making decisions that extend far beyond textbooks and bus routes. They are at the forefront of deeply impactful issues—curriculum standards, public health protocols, school safety, and parental rights. These decisions often reflect broader philosophical and political beliefs, and yet the current system allows candidates to run in nonpartisan races, leaving voters without clear insight into where candidates truly stand.

Requiring party affiliation does not inject politics into schools—politics are already present. What this bill does is **bring clarity** to the process. It allows voters to make more informed choices by providing a basic framework of a candidate’s values and worldview. Voters deserve to know whether a candidate aligns more closely with progressive or conservative principles when it comes to education policy, budget priorities, and governance philosophies.

This bill also enhances **accountability**. When a candidate is affiliated with a political party, voters have a better sense of their policy positions and can track their consistency over time. It also fosters a broader sense of civic engagement, where party organizations can support candidate recruitment, training, and vetting—leading to a more qualified and prepared pool of candidates.

We require this level of transparency for city council members, mayors, state legislators, and county commissioners. Why not for those who have the most important role, to oversee our children’s education?

To be clear, this bill does **not** prohibit independents from running. They are welcome to declare as such and appear on the ballot accordingly. But by requiring all candidates to declare a political affiliation, we are creating a more honest, open, and informative election process.

Some may argue that school board races should remain “above politics.” But we know the reality: political advocacy groups are already involved. National talking points are already influencing local decisions. Voters are already asking: “Where does this candidate stand?” We should not keep them guessing.

In conclusion, House Bill 153 brings alignment, transparency, and voter empowerment to the process of selecting those who shape the future of our public education system. I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration and support.

I would now like to turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Thomas Hall.

REP. HALL:

Thank you, Chair Ray, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the General Government committee for allowing me to speak on HB 153. Echoing my joint sponsor this is just another way we can further provide transparency to our constituents when making important decisions that impact their children.

Under this bill, a person would follow the same methods as currently apply to candidates for partisan office. 1. Filing a declaration of candidacy and petition at least 90 days before the primary election and winning the primary; 2. Filing an independent candidate nominating petition by the day before the primary election; 3. Being appointed by a party central committee to fill a vacancy on the ballot after a previous candidate dies, withdraws, or is disqualified.

Additionally, this bill clearly lays out the full process for both primary and independent candidates attempting to run for public office including deadlines and requirements.

This is a smart and simple change that will lead to greater levels of transparency for everyone and in turn has been shown to increase voter turnout in many areas that have already

implemented it. An informed public votes, and this is action we can take to make sure parents across the state are as informed as possible when making these important decisions.

Once again thank you Chair Ray and members of the committee for allowing us to testify on HB 153. We would be happy to answer any questions.