

HB 96 Testimony

Senate Finance Committee

May 27, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Ranking member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Teresa Fedor. I am a member of the Ohio State Board of Education, District 2 covering seven counties. Previous to this position, I served 22 years in the legislature, both in the House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate. I also had the privilege of teaching in the classroom 18 years after serving in the United States Air Force and Ohio Air National Guard.

I am here to oppose HB 96 budget language specifically removing elected members from the State Board of Education (SBOE), replacing them with Governor appointees. Constitutionally, the SBOE is an independent body created to remove past political influences, to guide and represent local school districts on public education matters.

Do not take away the voters' Constitutional right to elect SBOE representatives. Article VI, Section 4 of the Ohio Constitution is being undermined from the original intent and subsequent establishment of its passage. See [Report of the Ohio School Survey Committee](#). In 1955, the legislature was given the roadmap to establish the composition of the State Board of Education and its duties and responsibilities. The reasons that the State Educational Organization Committee gave in 1955 still hold true today. It's worth the read.

History and Overview:

Over 70 years ago, Ohioans' voted for a Constitutional right to establish an independent SBOE, the 4th branch of government to guide local public school districts. Voters chose to remove the Governor's authority to appoint the state education director responsible for running Ohio's public education system. Amended HB 96 now reverts back to the 1912 school governance system giving all power to the Governor.

Two years ago, the first power grab in the budget stripped the SBOE of many of its powers, handing nearly all education duties to the Governor. This first move may seem like a clever work around Ohio's Constitution; however, to seize the remaining power from the SBOE removes democracy itself. It is a complete dismantling of the voters' intent to protect public education from partisan control.

Ohioans in 1953 also knew partisan control and political interference is harmful for local control. It obstructed progress in Ohio's public education system. Voters experienced it first-hand and voted for a constitutional right to protect public education from political interference. The language in this budget for an all appointed SBOE does not provide the necessary distance from political interference.

A significant policy change especially dealing with a Constitutional Board should not be dealt with in a 4,000 page budget. The fact remains Ohio is still litigating the Collins v. Dewine lawsuit from the last budget. The issue could be put in a stand alone bill with public scrutiny and input from education advocates, teachers, parents, and local communities.

Ohioans in 1953 also knew that political interference obstructed progress in Ohio's public education system. Voters recognized a lack of local control, sustainable education policies, state representation to be the voice of local school boards and adequate state funding. They experienced first-hand the lack of local public input and voted for a constitutional right to protect public education from political interference. The language included in this proposed budget with an appointed SBOE does not provide the necessary distance from political agendas.

More reasons for establishing the state board of education in our constitution can be found in the book, "[MILESTONES: A History of the State Board of Education 1956-1986](#)". Chapter 1 Creation of the State Board of Education.

Politics in Education - The year was 1953.

"Harold, you turned down Harvey J. McCarthy for a teaching certificate. He's got a family of thirty-four McCarthys down there in Pike County. I need those votes. Give him a certificate."

"At that time, any Ohio politician could phone such messages over to the offices of the Ohio Department of Education at 65 South Front Street in Columbus. Because the superintendent of public instruction was appointed by the governor, partisan politics dictated a myriad of key educational decisions that filtered down into the school districts of the state."

Voters know the importance of having more local, not centralized, representation at the state level. They want more of a voice on education issues, not less. It is even more important today to have voters' representation on our State Board of Education. For these reasons, I respectfully ask that this language be removed from HB 96.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.