

Testimony of Karen Lloyd

Member, Ohio State Board of Education - District 8

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Chair Cirino, Vice-Chair Chavez, & Members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony and reflect on my service on the State Board of Education since my appointment in January 2025. Representing a district that spans 18 counties—much of it rural and deeply Appalachian—is a tremendous responsibility and a personal calling. This is my home. I grew up here. I live here. I worked in our schools. I understand our people and their concerns because I've lived them.

Since January, I have traveled over 2,800 miles to meet face-to-face with the educators, superintendents, and stakeholders who make up the heart of Ohio's education system. My mission is simple: connect, communicate, and represent—because good decisions come from listening to those who live the work every day.

I have attended six Educational Service Center Superintendent meetings, providing updates, answering questions, and bringing clarity to issues ranging from licensure timelines and renewals to investigative procedures and reprimands. I've also fielded many questions about licensure reciprocity with neighboring states—especially West Virginia and Pennsylvania, which are close to my district's borders and impact teacher movement and recruitment.

This May, I served as a guest speaker at the Ohio Mid-Eastern Regional Education Service Agency Spring Conference, sharing insight into the work of the State Board and how we intersect with the Department of Education and Workforce. Again, questions are raised, voices are heard, and information is provided, which only underscores the importance of collaboration and local voices in policy interpretation and implementation.

In Jefferson County, I was invited to speak at the April Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) Consortium Meeting. Superintendent Craft joined me in a similar meeting in Maysville. An LPDC is the committee that approves the coursework and Continuing Education Units (CEU) that educators must complete to be issued their licenses every 5 years. The committee assures that educators are involved in quality and pertinent courses and workshops. These meetings provided a venue where we discussed upcoming changes to license bands and anticipated shifts in the Resident Educator Program. We were able to share information on the Career Tech licenses and avenues to get people who are experienced in the workforce, into the classroom. Educators in attendance raised thoughtful concerns, and I left both meetings with not only new connections but with deeper insight into the practical impact of upcoming policy changes.

I've also met directly with the Union Local School District's superintendent and administrators, and participated in a legislative event in Stark County where I spoke with both lawmakers and

local officials. These interactions help bridge the gap between policy and practice, and ensure we remain focused on what matters most—supporting the people who support our students.

Beyond formal events, I've visited communities throughout Columbiana, Stark, Jefferson, Belmont, Harrison, Athens-Meigs, and Licking Counties. In some cases, I've even traveled outside my district, including into Muskingum County, because building bridges and sharing knowledge has no boundary. Every stop has reaffirmed for me how much educators appreciate being heard—and being seen. At every meeting, I've been warmly welcomed, and the message is consistent: they want a voice, and they want answers.

That's where I come in. I've worked hard to be a face behind the name, not just a contact on a website. I take questions. I follow-up. I bring their concerns back to Columbus, and I make sure the people who work in the schools of rural Ohio are not overlooked in big conversations. I am a retired teacher with 36 years of public elementary education. Being in the classroom, understanding the needs of the students and the teachers is a strength that resonates with fellow educators and administrators. I know what they are facing. I know what is expected and I know the standards required of all that work with Ohio's children.

Most importantly, I believe in the value of elected representation on the State Board of Education. When board members are elected, they are accountable to the people they serve—not just to political systems. Our schools belong to the people of Ohio, and their voices should shape our educational future.

Our rural and Appalachian schools face unique challenges—transportation, staffing, broadband access, and declining enrollment among them—but they also have a deep sense of community, tradition, and resilience. I am proud to carry that spirit into my work on the Board.

I'm honored to serve. I'm proud of the work I've done in just a few short months. And I remain committed to transparency, outreach, and responsiveness.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and your continued support of a strong, representative, and connected State Board of Education.

Karen Lloyd

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