

SB 107

**Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Blackshear, and esteemed members of the Senate General Government Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 107 today.**

My name is Lisa Breedlove Chaffee, and I am with Parents Rights In Education, I am a parent of a recent high school graduate from Hilliard City Schools, and a concerned Ohio voter. For the past several years, I've actively engaged in local education issues—from attending heated school board meetings to advocating for policies that prioritize kids over politics. As someone who's seen firsthand how opaque nonpartisan ballots confuse voters and allow hidden agendas to infiltrate our schools, I urge you to pass SB 107. This bill, introduced by Senator Andrew Brenner, is a straightforward step toward restoring trust in our education system by requiring party affiliations (R or D) to appear next to candidates' names on ballots for state and local school board races.

Under current law, school board elections are nonpartisan, meaning voters like me are left guessing. We see names on ballots but no clues about a candidate's values or potential biases. In today's climate—marked by national flashpoints over curriculum, parental rights, and even basic literacy—that's no longer acceptable. SB 107 changes that by mandating candidates run in party primaries and display their affiliations on general election ballots. It's not about turning local races into partisan battlegrounds; it's about *empowering voters* with the information they need to make informed choices.

Let me share why this matters in Ohio right now. In districts like Southwestern City Schools, recent board races have grown intensely partisan. Debates over enrollment policies, teacher contracts, and even gender-related discussions in classrooms reveal deep ideological divides—yet voters can't easily spot which candidates align with their views on these issues. I recall the 2023-2024 elections in nearby Dublin and Hudson, where anonymous social media campaigns and union-backed slates sowed confusion, leading to low turnout and regretted votes. Nationally, studies from EdChoice show that when voters know candidates' affiliations, participation in local elections rises by up to 15%, and satisfaction with outcomes improves because decisions reflect community values, not surprises. This transparency benefits everyone: parents who want fiscal responsibility and student-focused reforms, educators seeking stable environments free from ideological overreach, and even candidates who can campaign authentically. SB 107 doesn't force anyone to run— it just levels the playing field. For smaller districts under 20,000 population, it requires only 25 signatures from party electors to get on the primary ballot—a modest threshold that encourages broad participation without barriers.

I know some opponents, like the Ohio Teachers Union, argue this could deter independents or public employees barred from partisan runs. But let's be clear: most Ohioans *are* independents, yet they deserve to know if a candidate is backed by a party with a track record on education. This bill doesn't exclude anyone; it includes vital context. Similar reforms for Ohio Supreme Court races in 2021 boosted voter clarity without chaos—Republicans and Democrats alike reported higher confidence in judicial picks. Why deny that for our schools, where the stakes for our 1.7 million students are even higher?

In many Ohio schools alone, we've seen union influence sway board decisions, sometimes at the expense of cost-saving measures or parental input. Party labels would expose those dynamics, holding candidates accountable and reducing the "stealth" partisanship that's eroded trust. As a parent, I want my tax dollars and my kids' education guided by elected officials whose values I can vet—not hidden behind nonpartisan veils.

Members of the Committee, Ohio's families are counting on you. Pass SB 107 to make school board ballots a tool for democracy, not deception. Let's ensure every vote casts light on the path forward for our children.