



Representative Joe Miller, Ohio House District 56
House Government Oversight Committee - HB 298 Testimony
May 20th, 2021

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 298.

As my joint sponsor, Representative Bird so thoroughly stated, House Bill 298 seeks to revise the composition of the State Board of Education from 19 voting members to 11, by eliminating 8 Governor-appointed positions, while maintaining the 11 positions elected from designated State Board electoral districts. In addition, this bill requires the Governor-appointed members to retain their positions on the State Board until the expiration of their current terms. Since you already have been given an in-depth history of the State Board of Education, I will just hit on why I see this bill as good for Ohioans, public education and the influence the electorate can have on education in Ohio.

Prior to 1995, the State Board of Education was composed solely of 11 elected members, until bill language was crammed through Session to create 8 new appointed positions. Ironically, this is precisely how HB 70 came to be Ohio law, which established Academic Distress Commissions for schools considered to be “failing” by giving the governor control over the appointees. There seems to be a pattern of disenfranchisement in the actions of governors regarding education in Ohio.

As we have learned time and time again, rushed legislation is never good legislation. Now here we are, years later, working to correct these mistakes and return the institution to its rightful place and influence over our schools.

House Bill 298 will return the original intent and give taxpayers a voice on issues and policies that will affect the education of their children. This places the responsibility of the electorate to be more intentional in who we elect to the State Board of Education. We need pro-public education representation on the board that represents public education. This bill allows for more of a separation of power and return to a more transparent and accountable state board. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.