

Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
December 7, 2022
Sub. S.B. 178

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill (S.B.) 178. My name is Kyle Garrett; I come from Union County—Senator Bill Reineke’s district.

I am greatly disturbed that S.B. 178 has been introduced. This is the second time the General Assembly has attempted to “reform” the Ohio State Board of Education. The first time was in 2018 under House Bill 512, which was defeated when the public found out about its disgusting attempt at seizing power from parents. What makes this second attempt all the more troubling is to covertly pass it before voters can assess the bill for themselves. Indeed, the bill’s text is not to be found on the Ohio Legislature website. All that is there is a placeholder page about the General Assembly’s plan to “reform” the Board, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Ohio Department of Education.

Why the secrecy? Such tactics are the practice of Democrats, not of Republicans.

Now the General Assembly comes again, promising transparency, effectiveness, and democracy if We the People just hand over our choices and children. Where is that transparency? Certainly not on the Legislature’s website!

As for democracy, a Proponent argued that one reason to pass S.B. 178 is people tend to vote for Board Members based on name recognition. To paraphrase the testimony from Troy McIntosh on November 30, democracy is not working; so, let us do away with it.

That is why we have the State Board as we do. To put all regulative powers in the hands of a bureaucrat is authoritarian and threatens the right to school choice. Democrats, would you support the education policies of a Republican-appointed director? Republicans, would you support the policies of a Democrat-appointed director? Of course not! So, why does my Republican Senator sponsor this bill?

I will not dispute the shortcomings of the Board and of the Department of Education. Indeed, I agree with the Proponents that the issues they have raised must be fixed as soon as possible. But if the answer is to strip people of their ability to govern themselves, then the problem is not with the existing system but with those who run it.

That is what S.B. 178 seeks to do; it is designed to steal power from ordinary Ohioans and give it to unaccountable bureaucrats. The last time we trusted bureaucrats with our children’s education was during the pandemic and our children were sent home and their academics suffered.

Can freedom be sacrificed for the sake of societal progress? No.

What freedom—what social progress—is there under dictators, kings, and usurpers? None.

Democracy is about decentralizing power. S.B. 178 only centralizes it. When a Proponent said that the Opposition would make it about democracy and freedom, he was right.

It is about freedom, and I will not support nor vote for the Senator and the Representative who sponsors or supports S.B. 178.

Do not pass S.B. 178.