



Don Jones & Dave Dobos
State Representatives

Chairman Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing me and my joint sponsor to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 12, which is a companion bill to SB1 and a reintroduction of SB 178 from last General Assembly.

The bill's focus is still the same: to improve academic and workforce skills to drive better accountability and outcomes for our kids' education and career readiness. Our children deserve strong educations that prepare them for their futures, and we must hold government accountable in that mission.

This bill has been driven by local school districts and educational partners. Their struggles with the state's education structure and lack of supports have informed this legislation, and these issues likely are common in your all of our districts across the state. From my time as an educator and I have learned in the last several years here in Columbus, it is apparent that the current structure of education in Ohio is failing our children.

According to 2021's Ohio Remediation Report, the remediation rate for students enrolling in a math or English remediation class sits at 19.3%, which demonstrates that a troubling number in our next generation of Ohioans are not prepared for post-secondary instruction or life outside the classroom.¹

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<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3A%22Ohio+Department+of+Higher+Education%22&ff1=subEnrollment&ff2=subEconomically+Disadvantaged&id=ED619293>



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Meanwhile, far too many K-12 students in Ohio are falling behind in their learning. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report shows that in Ohio, our fourth graders and eighth graders have fallen drastically behind in both reading and math.²

This data demonstrates significant problems within our education system, and, highlights serious ways in which we are failing our children.

In addition to academic struggles, we are not adequately connecting our students to their purpose. The traditional path, involving students taking the ACT or SAT and going to college, is common in our schools and appropriate for many students who plan to earn a degree at a higher education institution after graduating high school, but many young people simply are not aware of the options available to them should they choose another path in career-oriented education. These programs all too frequently are not considered equal to college-focused pathways, but they deserve elevation and promotion for what they teach students about their futures and themselves.

The evidence shows there is a need for systemic change in our education system if we are to ensure our kids become well-educated and career-ready adults. HB 12 addresses this need by refocusing our system on what matters most: Ohio's students.

Under HB 12, the Department of Education will become a state-level agency called the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) with a dual focus on primary and secondary education and preparing students

² <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/National-and-International-Testing/National-Assessment-of-Educational-Progress-in-Ohi>



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for the workforce. The department will be led by a Director who is appointed by the Governor and subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. The Department will consist of two divisions: the Division of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Division of Career Technical Education. Both divisions will be headed by deputy directors appointed by the Director. The Department will be generally responsible for enforcing rules under the Ohio Administrative Code and adopting new rules as required by law. This design is meant to promote communication and collaboration between schools and education leaders to ensure accountability and transparency.

The bill also makes changes to the State Board of Education (SBOE). The Ohio Constitution establishes the SBOE and specifies that the board selects the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The state constitution states that the specific roles and duties of the board are left to the General Assembly to establish through law. It is important to note that this bill does not change the structure or composition of the State Board. Instead, it establishes the duties of the SBOE to include the implementation and enforcement of rules on teacher licensure and the professional conduct of our educators, and determinations regarding school district territory transfers. The Board can also make recommendations to the Director of the DEW regarding priorities, and will continue to appoint the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who will serve as both the Board's secretary and an advisor to the DEW Director. All other duties currently under the purview of the SBOE will be assigned to the new Division of Primary and Secondary Education; duties that deal with career education will be assigned to the Division of Career Technical Education.



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Following numerous discussions, House Bill 12 does include some changes to SB 178. HB 12 aims to guarantee homeschooling families the ability to home educate their child by exempting a child from compulsory school attendance when that child is receiving instruction in core subject areas from their parents. It also codifies current rules regarding non-chartered nonpublic schools into Ohio revised Code. Other changes include giving more checks to the legislature over the Department of Education and Workforce. For example, the Director of DEW, and the deputy directors of the two divisions, must receive the advice and consent of the Senate, and cannot hold these offices, on a permanent or an interim basis, for more than 45 days without the Senate's advice and consent. Moreover, HB 12 permits the General Assembly to invalidate or rescind any rules adopted by the Department.

Overall, HB 12 forces our state education system to be more accountable in how it oversees the education of our kids. It is glaringly obvious that the current structure is not adequately preparing the next generation of Ohioans for life-long success. Neither is the current system responsible to our taxpayers, who are paying taxes toward a structure that lacks efficiency and does not produce sufficient results. One example of this is the failure of the Department to implement the ACE program for the sake of helping students receive critical after-school enrichment services. Another is the failure of getting school districts, such as Reynoldsburg, resources for transportation needs. Yet another is the failure of the Department to address chronic absenteeism. In the last school year, nearly a third of students were chronically absent, including almost half of all African American students in the state. There is no accountability for these failures to our citizens or our students and their families.



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Furthermore, this current system fails our state's future. According to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, Ohio's postsecondary attainment is not keeping up with the needs of business in our state, which has led us to a massive talent gap. Between 2018 and 2028, 75% of Ohio's job growth will be in occupations requiring at least a postsecondary non-degree credential, and over 50% will require a bachelor's degree or higher.

Despite this growing need, our students are not receiving the education they need to pursue post-secondary education or earn much-needed workforce credentials in high-demand fields. What will we do when Intel opens and when Honda and Ford complete their expansion projects? We must have a well-educated, prepared workforce that can meet the needs of these and many other employers throughout the state.

According to EducationWeek in the late 2000's Ohio ranked as high as 6th in education. In 2017 we were 22nd, and in 2021 we are ranked 27th.³ Any defense of the status quo or lack of action is a defense of decline. It is time for us to refocus and reenergize education in Ohio. House Bill 12 is about ensuring accountability for our kids, our schools, our taxpayers, our economy, and our future. It's time we create a system that works for our children, who deserve our best efforts toward their ultimate success.

Chairman Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you again for allowing us to provide testimony today on this very important priority bill. We will answer any questions you may have.

³ <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/quality-counts>