

Opponent Testimony for HB-12
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

Testimony Date: 3/21/23

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Parent, Pediatrician

Representatives Jones, Dobos, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

As the parent of two students attending public schools for primary education in Hudson, Ohio and a pediatrician, I am voicing my opposition to HB-12. This bill creates significant gaps in oversight of non-chartered, private schools and homeschooling programs, and hampers the democratic process in taxpayer funded schools.

First, after the massive problems witnessed by the ECOT program and the vast sums of taxpayer dollars squandered in this program that left many children with significant educational deficiencies, our state should have learned that lack of accountability in primary education is problematic, at best. Public schools have stringent regulations and requirements, and all schools need to stand up to such scrutiny. More recently, the Nazi homeschooling program in the Sandusky area again shows the serious need for rigorous oversight to prevent exploitation of students. HB-12 does the opposite and should not be supported.

Second, removing decision-making capacity from the State Board of Education and transferring that to an appointed position means that Ohio residents will have little to no ability to influence the decisions being made on behalf of our children. The solution to recent bureaucratic challenges within the BOE should be addressed with targeted improvements, such as improved onboarding and mentoring or new members and ongoing professional development. As a physician, I work in a field that recognizes the need for constant ongoing education and development of new skills. The education field continues to grow and evolve, and the parallels to medicine are significant; ODE and BOE members should be recognized as individuals needing continuous training, rather than discarding a system that supports democratic decision-making and accountability. State BOE members represent varied constituencies across our state and that variety is what makes Ohio strong. Consolidation into an appointed position disregards the diversity of students across our state.

The changes proposed in HB-12 will result in weakening the educational foundation that our children need to be successful in the future. Ohio needs its children to mature into astute problem solvers and collaborators to thrive in our world, and HB-12 fractures that foundation with lax regulations and limiting input in crafting the future. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on HB-12.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wendy Van Ittersum, MD, FAAP