

Opposition Testimony to SB 21

By
Mike Halaiko

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of The Civil Justice Committee,

My name is Mike Halaiko, and I am a retired Educator with over forty years of experience in Ohio Public and Private Schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today in opposition to SB 21.

I am opposed to SB 21 for the following reasons:

On the heels of a guilty verdict of Former House Speaker Householder for orchestrating Ohio's largest corruption scandal, Lawmakers should be focused on increasing transparency in our government, not pushing through vague bills such as Senate Bill 21 that give more unaccountable power to elected officials. Our system is broken; SB 21 state legal action provisions will only make things worse.

Senate Bill 21 is bad for Ohio because:

- Ohio already has a system in place for providing counsel to lawmakers when warranted by the Ohio Attorney General.
- Statehouse leaders should not have additional resources at unlimited expense to put them at an advantage over citizens and other entities challenging the constitutionality of laws.
- The ability to hire any private attorney could lead to further corruption using pass-through entities and undue influence.
- Attorney-client privilege between a private attorney and our Governor, Senate President, or House Speaker is the opposite of the transparency our state needs right now.
- Allowing the legislature and Governor the automatic right to intervene in a court proceeding, without requiring permission from said court, is an enormous power grab and a clear violation of our state's separation of powers, which is meant to be a check on this type of action.

Thank you for considering the harmful impacts of these state involvement provisions of SB 21. I urge you to vote no and work in a bipartisan way to create real transparency in our state government. Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have.