

Testimony on Sub. Senate Bill 1
House Economic & Workforce Committee

Submitted by:
Deborah Cooper

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to Sub. SB 1.

I am an Ohio resident, a voter, and a former educator who has taught at all grade levels from kindergarten through 12th grade, as both a full-time and a substitute teacher in both public and private schools. I have raised three sons, all of whom attended public schools, and two of my grandchildren attend public schools in Ohio.

While I believe parents should be able to choose how they wish to educate their children, public school funding should not suffer for it. A robust public education system is absolutely essential for any sort of democracy to work. We badly need informed citizens who can think critically.

Right now, parents with problems or concerns about a public school district can speak with an elected official on the State Board of Education, and can hold that official accountable. If Sub. SB 1 passes, only an *appointed* official will oversee education. Where is the accountability? We've already endured the ECOT scandal. How many families have fallen victim to greedy and corrupt people who have lied while lining their own pockets?

If Sub. SB 1 passes, an administration with little to no background in education will be in charge. Currently, at least SOME Board members are elected on a non-partisan basis, and expertise and experience in education is a big factor in determining who is elected. The governor already appoints eight members to the Board; in my view, ALL Board members should be elected.

Sub. SB 1 violates Ohio's constitution. In 1953, a constitutional amendment established the State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public instruction, to be selected by the Board. Consequently, the legislature established an elected State Board of Education, and all responsibilities of the state education agency were removed from the governor's office. Sub. SB 1 would return the core responsibilities of the State Board of Education to the governor's office, which makes the 1953 constitutional amendment ineffective. This is not how the democratic process should work.

To blame the Board for a decline in our state's performance in education is disingenuous. There are many factors at play, not least of which is the lack of appropriate funding and the legislature's refusal to comply with the Ohio Supreme Court's ruling that found Ohio's public education funding plan to be unconstitutional. If Sub. SB 1 is passed, along with a voucher plan that would take money from public education, and there is a reduction of state and local taxes through HB 1, then whatever money might be more fairly allocated to public schools across the state will "leave by the back door." Rather than having ONE taxpayer-funded public education system, which is mandated by Ohio's constitution, we would, in effect, have three taxpayer-funded educational systems (public, private, and home schools), only one of which (public system) would have much oversight. How can we expect to provide a public education system that serves ALL Ohioans fairly?

Please think twice about the consequences of supporting Sub. SB 1. Just say no.

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