

Rachel Rosen DeGolia  
1648 Compton Road  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

Opposition Testimony - HB 12  
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee Hearing  
March 19, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice Chairman Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, my name is Rachel DeGolia and I appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts with this committee about HB 12 at this stage of the legislative process. I live in Cleveland Heights, my two daughters were educated in public schools and my 5-year-old grandson will be starting kindergarten at our local public school this fall. One of my daughters is a school psychologist in the West Geauga Public Schools. I have been a public school advocate, including a PTA leader, at my children's schools for over 35 years.

I am opposed to the radical changes that HB 12 would impose on how we govern public education in Ohio. It takes the power to make education policy away from those the citizens have elected to our State Board of Education. The citizens of Ohio chose these board members because of their expertise and their knowledge of the particular needs and issues faced by schools in their districts. Instead, this proposed bill would concentrate that power in the hands of a few political leaders who do not have the necessary expertise nor are in touch with the diverse needs of students and their schools throughout out state.

When voters select who represents us on the state board of education, we have a voice. An elected board conducts its business in public and facilitates public input. There are competing ideas and philosophies about how best to educate our children. This structure allows input from both educators and citizens and, thus, increases everyone's investment in the policies that board members devise.

This radical change is fundamentally undemocratic and makes Ohio voters like me feel that our voices are being disregarded. It is also exceedingly unwise. The elected members of our state board are in touch with their constituents, know the needs of our communities, are informed about how education is working across our 610 school districts, and are passionate about education. The lack of consensus in recent years in the public debate around many issues makes real representation and full public engagement in the rule and lawmaking process more important than ever. A single individual appointed by the governor cannot adequately replace what our broadly representative elected state board members do.

I am also puzzled as to why this bill would lump K – 12 education policy in the same department with workforce development. These are two important, but very different functions of government. I mentioned by grandson is about to start kindergarten. How can we possibly expect the same people who know what the priorities for workforce development should be for Ohio to also know what's best for my kindergarten grandson, or his middle school babysitter, or

for any other aspect of public education policy for that matter? I am very afraid this step is consolidating government functions to the point where government becomes ineffective. That's not what Ohio taxpayers and voters elected our legislators to do.

We need our State Board of Education to be allowed and supported to do its work. I urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to reject HB 12 and allow the State Board of Education to get on with their work!

Submitted by,  
Rachel DeGolia  
1648 Compton Road  
Cleveland Heights OH 44118