

H.B. No. 12 Opponent Testimony
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Amy Fox-Sir Louis
March 21, 2023

Hello, Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, the rest of the committee, and this room full of people who care about the education of Ohio's children. Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to HB 12 today.

My name is Amy Fox-Sir Louis. I am a homeschooling parent in the northeast part of the state. I also help to run the largest homeschooling support group in Ohio and I'm board president for a nonprofit organization which offers enrichment and educational opportunities for homeschooling families. But I'm here today as an individual in opposition on HB 12.

I'm a big fan of homeschooling. My four kids have never attended public school. In fact, I'm a homeschool graduate myself and didn't attend any public institution of learning until I entered college. My family appreciates the flexibility of homeschooling, especially the ability to tailor each individual child's education to their needs. One of my children has a major medical condition which has made homeschooling a huge advantage for our family. My oldest currently is enrolled in the honors program at the University of Akron, working towards an engineering degree, and he is doing very well. Our family has seen the benefits of home education.

So you may be surprised that I am here to give opposition testimony on this bill, especially since the currently proposed version would simplify home education requirements in Ohio.

I oppose HB 12 in part because home education regulations under current BOE guidance have served Ohio families well for more than thirty years without any significant changes. I believe current regulations strike a reasonable balance between the accountability parents need when educating our children and the freedom we have as parents to determine how best to meet their educational needs.

But the biggest objection I have to HB 12 is that it removes power from the hands of the voters and puts that power into the hands of unelected appointees. I fully agree with Abraham Lincoln when he said: "Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in." Education is one of the most important issues we face as Ohioans, no matter how you educate your children and no matter if you even have children at all.

Currently, voters elect part of the State Board of Education, while part of the BOE is appointed by the governor. With all due respect, this partially elected, partially appointed structure has not been very successful. Further removing power from the electorate and placing it in the hands of political appointees is a bad idea. I'll go so far as to say that I believe it is an un-American idea. It's a very rare

situation where voters should be willing to give up their power to vote and hold elected officials accountable.

Ohio's government, like our entire democracy, is by the people, for the people. Let us not give up one more piece of our power as the people to hold elected officials directly accountable, especially on something as important as education.

I am fundamentally opposed to the restructuring of Ohio's education system as proposed in HB 12. Instead, I suggest a return to the days of a fully elected State Board of Education. Let voters hold the Board of Education to account.

Please vote against HB 12.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition today.