



Opposition Testimony for House Bill 12
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
March 20, 2023
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Honesty for Ohio Education

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Lightbody, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony against House Bill 12. My name is Cynthia Peeples, and I am the founding director of Honesty for Ohio Education.

[Honesty for Ohio Education](https://www.honestyforohioeducation.org) is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition representing more than [50](#) organizational partners advocating for every student's right to receive an honest, high-quality education regardless of race, identity, income, or zip code. We believe students benefit most when caring families, trained educators, dedicated school boards, and earnest policymakers work together for the healthy development and quality education of all Ohio children.

While our coalition strongly supports the integration of a Whole Child approach to learning with a student-centered workforce development plan, we oppose House Bill 12 for its misshapen priorities and partisanship nature. This sweeping state takeover of public education prioritizes business and political needs over student needs while failing to address longstanding, systemic issues plaguing Ohio education. The bill is also an anti-democratic measure silencing the voices of families, voters, and other Ohioans concerned about public education. HB 12 goes further, threatening public safety by clearing pathways for neo-Nazi extremists to prosper in Ohio's loosely regulated homeschooling system. Ohio needs collaborative solutions for our young people, families, and economy, not partisan power grabs and business deals that distract from real education issues.

In shifting control of public education to the governor and prioritizing a workforce pipeline over student needs, this plan does nothing to address real issues directly impacting student outcomes, such as decades of unconstitutional school funding, under-resourced schools, teacher shortages, and unfit working conditions. This plan also ignores unacceptable learning conditions rooted in systemic food and housing insecurities, inequitable access to healthcare, a widening digital divide, and extremist culture war issues peddled in this Statehouse. Ohio elected leaders are prioritizing bills that weaponize race and identity to attack our most marginalized, vulnerable students and deny their right to exist. How can legislators and the business community support a workforce development plan that condones the dehumanization of the students they so desperately seek to fill their workforce pipeline?

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House Bill 12 also directly attacks democracy by stripping our democratically-elected State Board of Education members of their key roles and duties. This move eliminates the ability of families and voters to use our duly elected State Board representatives as a direct voice at the state level. Per law, our 11 elected State Board of Education members are there to represent the unique needs and priorities of the families living in 11 State Board districts across the state. Not only does this bill silence those families, it also shifts authority to the governor injecting partisan politics, party agendas, and extremist legislation into what should be a safe, nonpartisan arena.

Finally, given the deeply concerning discovery of a neo-Nazi homeschooling network operating in Ohio, we strongly oppose measures in House Bill 12 that would prevent needed rules around Ohio's loosely regulated homeschooling system. Understanding and supporting the vital, important role that homeschooling serves for thousands of students across Ohio, we feel legislators should build strong, safety guardrails around homeschooling to prevent the future endangerment and exploitation of children, and the life-threatening dissemination of hateful, antisemitic, racist, homophobic, genocidal values. Nazi supporters and sympathizers are a clear and present danger to our education system, public safety, and domestic security that demands immediate attention.

As a coalition, we view the primary role of education as helping students develop an authentic sense of self and comprehensive life skills that create lifelong learners who are engaged and productive members of society. For Ohio to become that destination state that Governor DeWine envisioned in his State of the State address, legislators must work with educators to create student-first, Whole Child policies that give every young person an active stake in Ohio's future.

We urge you to vote no on House Bill 12 and redirect your efforts and resources to solving the real issues impacting our students, public education, and Ohio's economic viability. Our students deserve leaders who focus on moving them from surviving to thriving, regardless of their chosen career path.

Thank you.

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