



February 20, 2023

Testimony Opposing Senate 1 Before the Senate Education Committee

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony against Senate Bill 1. My name is Cynthia Peebles, and I am the founding director of Honesty for Ohio Education.

[Honesty for Ohio Education](#) 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 supports the integration of a Whole Child approach to learning with a student-centered workforce development plan, we oppose Senate Bill 1 for its misshapen priorities and partisanship. Namely, this sweeping overhaul prioritizes business needs over student needs and fails 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 in public education. The plan goes further to threaten 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 business deals that distract from real education issues and endanger communities.

Senate Bill 1 is another legislative workaround that does nothing to address the issues directly impacting student outcomes and well-being. By shifting oversight of public education from the Department of Education to the governor, this power grab ignores decades of unconstitutional school funding, under-resourced schools, teacher shortages, and unfit working conditions. Instead, bill proponents advocate for measures that weaken public schools, like universal voucher programs that divest needed state funds away from struggling impoverished districts. Because SB 1 prioritizes Ohio's business community, this overhaul ignores student realities mired in food and housing insecurities, a widening digital divide, lack of transportation, and families ravaged by opioids and COVID. The youth mental health crisis deepening in every state demands that legislators, schools, service providers, and community partners commit resources and energy to student safety and well-being before building workforce pipelines and loosening child labor laws birthed during the Industrial Revolution.

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Development of any career-technical pathway should center the Whole Child framework while encouraging career exploration and self-discovery. We oppose trapping students who choose career-technical education into a single path they cannot exit. By blurring graduation requirements and differentiating the curriculum between career-tech and traditional high school graduation, the plan unfairly limits options later in life. Our coalition advocates for career-tech education to be among the options presented to every young person, and for every student to graduate with a holistic and rigorous education equipping them to transition into high-functioning adulthood.

Senate Bill 1 also represents a direct attack on democracy. By stripping the democratically elected State Board of Education of its key roles and duties, the measure removes the ability of families and voters to have a voice at the state level. Per law, elected State Board members must represent the unique needs and priorities of 11 State Board districts across the state. Now more than ever, Ohio families need deep relationships with their duly elected representatives to address important concerns in their communities. Shifting authority away from families and voters to the governor injects politics into what should be a nonpartisan arena. This bill places a curtain around K-12 education, cloaking transparency, accessibility, and accountability.

Given the deeply concerning revelations about the neo-Nazi homeschool ring operating in Upper Sandusky, our coalition strongly opposes measures in Senate Bill 1 that would prevent needed rules around the loosely regulated system, even as Senate Bill 11 increases tax credits for homeschooling families. Understanding the vital role homeschooling serves for thousands of students across Ohio, legislators must impose guardrails to prevent the future dissemination of hateful, antisemitic, racist, homophobic, and genocidal values. Nazi supporters and sympathizers are a threat to public safety and domestic security that demands immediate attention.

The primary role of education is to help students develop comprehensive life skills enabling them to become their whole selves. This self-actualization creates lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive members of society who build pathways for a vibrant, sustainable future. For Ohio to become the destination state Governor Mike DeWine envisioned in his 2023 State of the State Address, schools must center a student-first Whole Child approach to education that provides every young person with an active stake in Ohio's future.

We ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 1. Please refocus your efforts and resources on addressing the longstanding systemic issues besieging public education and Ohio communities. Our young leaders of tomorrow deserve real solutions, today, that move them from surviving to thriving, regardless of their chosen career path.

Thank you.

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