

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 Jennifer Simkins-Bullock and I am from Toledo, Ohio

As you know, SB-1 has 4 major parts. I take issue with three of them. (Frankly, I would probably take issue with the 4th part if I understood it better.)

With regard to part 1, **Transference of State K-12 Governance**, this bill proposes essentially neutering the State Board of Education and giving their duties to a Governor-appointed Director of Education and Workforce. This bill would give the Governor the final say in what is deemed "educational" and this would undoubtedly be politically motivated not based in the educational needs of our kids to succeed in a competitive and fast-changing world. Also, would this mean that every time there is a change in governor, the whole focus of the educational system could change? What kind of continuity does that provide our kids.

The current state board of education consists of 19 people, 8 of whom are already appointed by the Governor. So the Governor already has a big impact on educational standards and policies. Putting essentially all educational matters into the hands of the Governor allows a single person to have too much control over the direction of education in the state and this person would likely not be specifically trained in Education or even likely ever took a course on education or educational management. Rather than having 11 people elected by the people, there would be 1 person appointed by the Governor. So the Governor's agenda becomes Ohio's educational agenda. The change will end up becoming the basis for so-called "culture war" changes in educational policy like policies toward trans-youth. To me, this looks like a partisan response following last November's election when voters overwhelmingly rejected extremist values and elected three pro-equity, student-centered State Board Members. Thus, I would describe SB 1 as anti-democratic, pro-partisan, and not in the best educational interests of our kids.

Parts 3 and 4 of the proposed bill would

Prohibit the Director of Education and Workforce from adopting any additional rules for nonchartered nonpublic schools.

Also, SB 1 would Prohibit the Director of Education and Workforce from adopting any additional rules regarding home education.

These prohibitions seem particularly short-sighted given that things change over time. Specifically preventing any new rules eliminates the possibility of clarifying current rules that are misinterpreted or incorporating new information and ideas.

With regard to homeschooling, I find it baffling that home schooling must be supervised and directed by the child's parent rather than a "qualified person." This seems to pretty clearly demonstrate that parents are not necessarily qualified instructors. This implies that a parent is always right even if that parent is factually wrong. A parent also can't teach what they don't know or don't understand. I don't think my parents could have adequately taught me calculus. Parents don't necessarily provide a range of viewpoints or provide their kids with evidence-based information. While I have no specific data, I suggest that many parents who home school do so specifically to inculcate viewpoints that are not generally accepted by society or are even in direct opposition to social norms.

For example, SB 1 is particularly baffling given the recent discovery of a nazi-homeschooling network here in Ohio. Per [The Guardian](#) there were 2500 subscribers to this network which distributed ready-made lesson plans including writing exercises based on quotes by Hitler, history lessons praising confederate general Lee as a "grand role model for young, white men" and denigrating Martin Luther King Jr. as "the antithesis of our civilization and our people."

While a spokesman for the Republican governor said in a statement to Statehouse News Bureau: "Racism and anti-Semitism are vile and repugnant. Governor DeWine condemns them in all forms"—yet in this proposed legislation, no additional or new restrictions could be made to home schooling.

Is this what we want for Ohio students? While promoting "parents-rights" is all the rage right now, we cannot assume that all parents have viewpoints

that are healthy, accurate, and free-from bias. If a parent believes the world is flat and home-schools their child that the world is flat, this child will be ill-prepared for college or for real-world jobs that require employees to have an accurate knowledge base. Parents already can influence their kids for the 8 or so hours they are awake and away from school. They have plenty of time to model and promote their beliefs, religion, tenets, and biases.

For Ohio youth to grow into knowledgeable citizens and competent workers, they need access to rigorous educational standards not loosey-goosy and biased viewpoints.