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The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

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## Senate Bill 178: Interested Party Testimony

### Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee

**Wednesday, November 30, 2022**

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Scott DiMauro. I am a high school Government teacher from Worthington, and it is my honor to serve as the President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of OEA's 120,000 members, I rise today to provide testimony on Senate Bill 178.

At present, OEA is an interested party on this legislation. However, I will tell you that I have trepidation about this proposal, both in terms of the substance of the change and the timing. SB 178 proposes a significant shift in the way education is overseen and supported in Ohio. I do not believe that this type of change should be enacted in the waning days of session Stakeholder input is needed.

Education, by its very nature, is collaborative. Educating a student requires collaboration between the teachers in the building, administration, education support professionals, and families. On another level, we are not one statewide education system, but hundreds of school districts, vocational schools, ESCs, charter schools, and private schools. In the spirit of that collaboration, changes that impact education should be well vetted and well understood. What will change and what will stay the same? The concerns of stakeholders should be heard and addressed to avoid unintended consequences.

It is worth taking a hard look at how the State Board of Education and the Ohio Department of Education function and what can be improved. I believe it is also important to note some positives about the current system. The members of the State Board, whether elected or appointed, are well intentioned and have given of themselves to serve Ohio's students. The meetings and deliberations of the State Board of Education are public. As such, all Ohioans have the opportunity for input on rule



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making and other decisions made by the Board. Elected Board members build relationships and do outreach to their constituents. Furthermore, Board members and Department of Education staff meet regularly with stakeholder groups and has sought out input on issues such as professional development, ESSA applications, strategic planning, and more.

There is a lot of experience and institutional knowledge within ODE. Would that talent transfer over to the newly created Department of Education and Workforce? Would the organizational chart change only at the top or throughout the new agency? What programs will be emphasized more? What programs will be emphasized less? In short, what is the plan? I find it troubling that this bill would get serious consideration during lame duck without answers to these important questions. If there are answers to these questions and they are not being shared with key stakeholder groups, I'd find that equally troubling.

The bottom line, speaking on behalf of OEA members across the state, is that we want what is best for students. Our students, educators, and schools face daunting challenges. We know that our school districts need support. We need equitable funding; strategies to attract and retain quality educators; resources to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. Regardless of the powers and duties of the State Board of Education, how the Department of Education is organized, or whatever name it goes by, Ohio's public educators must have a seat at the table. We want educators and other stakeholders to have input and a meaningful voice in decision making. That is how we'll get the best results for the students we serve.

In closing, I would advise against passing this bill in lame duck to allow adequate time for stakeholder input and buy in. OEA stands ready to participate in any discussion about how we can improve education for Ohio's students.

Chair Brenner, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer questions from the committee.

