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RE: Testimony - H.B. 298 – State Board of Education

Good morning Chair Wilkin, Vice-Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 298.

Although I am currently an elected member of the Ohio State Board of Education serving my third term, please note that I am not speaking on behalf of the SBE.

My name is Diana Fessler, and as a former member of the Ohio House, it is a pleasure to provide testimony on this much-needed and long-overdue bill. I commend the sponsor and co-sponsors for introducing it and for the committee for taking it up.

When George Voinovich was running for Governor, he ran as the presumptive education governor. And so, in 1995, **needing to stay true to his campaign platform**, he pushed for an all-appointed board. In the end, an 11-8 hybrid board became law, but via a highly questionable legislative process.

Consequently, state law permits the appointment of *eight* individuals to the 19-member Board. Currently, because of the *resignation* of an elected member, *nine* members are political appointees who are accountable only to the person who appointed them. (10/9)

I trust that upon reflection, members of the House would soundly reject the notion that it would be beneficial to have a hybrid House made up of elected members and political appointees. Likewise, I doubt that many members would find it suitable to have a political appointee serving as Speaker. Nor do I believe that most legislators would find it wholly agreeable for appointees to hold the leadership positions or serve as committee chairs. (50/49)

In addition, the appointments do not comport with centuries of adherence to the practice of broad-based *representative* government. Neither are the appointments in the best interest of those you seek to serve: Ohio parents and their children.

I urge the adoption of H.B. 298, but I suggest due consideration be given to an amendment terminating the appointments upon passage of the bill. **There is no valid reason to continue with a practice predicated on a candidate's twenty-seven-year-old campaign platform.**

Chairman Wilkin, at your convenience, I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the committee may have.

There are more instances of the abridgment of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments from those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.

James Madison