

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you so much for allowing me to be here this morning! My name is Robert Wooten. I'm currently serving in my second term as School Board Member in the New Richmond Exempted Village School District. I'm also an Executive Salesman for a Fortune 500 Fin Tech company. I'm also a Pastor in my local community as well as serve as the President of our local new Richmond Junior Lions football and cheer program. One of my most favorite titles is being a husband of my bride, Becky for almost 25 years. We celebrate that in December as well as a father to 6 kids, one of which we adopted.

I'm here today in favor of House Bill 298, which would make our State Board of Education go back to an all-elected board of 11 individuals and ending the Governors ability to appoint 8, which now makes up 42% of the board-close to 50%!

As I understand it correctly, there are three big roles of the State Board of Education Members:

1. Set direction for the Ohio Department of Education by establishing education policies and recommendations.
2. Hold itself accountable to the public for competent, conscientious and effective accomplishment of its obligations.
3. Evaluate its work to ensure accountability for its performance through its strategic plan and goals.

To me, supporting House Bill 298 isn't difficult at all because this isn't about politics; this is simply about principle.

Here are the reasons why I support HB298:

1. The current set up of giving the Governor (any Governor for that matter, Republican or Democrat) the ability to appoint 8 of the 19 members, allows the Executive Branch to be way too powerful. So, it's about eliminating too much power at the top over education to Ohio schools. That simple.
2. Second, because those 8 are just appointed by the Governor, the issue then becomes that they are there for the Governor to potentially push his or their agenda. Not necessarily what is best for Ohio students.
3. Third and lastly, as a duly elected School Board Member now in my second term, I've come to grips with the fact that I am voted on by the people, for the people-mainly for my students in my district. The people that have voted me into this position have entrusted me with doing the right thing for our school district. I am accountable to my voters and rest assured, when my term is up next, they will get to determine if I earn another four years in this position. Why? Because I'm accountable to them and the four years that I have served in this role will determine if I have done a good enough job in their eyes to be placed back into this position. I'm accountable to my people. The same can't be said at the State Board of Education with 8 of its members. Being appointed, they are accountable to no one, not even the Governor. They have no standard to being accountable.