



February 9, 2016

Mr. Steven Hollon
Executive Director
Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission
77 S. High St., 24th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Mr. Hollon and the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the method of selection of the State Board of Education members.

Ohio PTA, a 115-year-old branch of the National PTA, is composed of nearly 70,000 members across the state. Ohio PTA's mission is to be a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child. In 1973, Ohio PTA's membership adopted a resolution affirming that the legal responsibility to make decisions for our public schools has been delegated by the people to the elected board of education and we oppose all activities that threaten taxpayer's control of public schools.

The public schools of the United States have been established by law and are financed by the citizens and public funds. The administration of local schools and the final decisions on policies that govern their operation have been delegated by the people to elected, non-partisan Boards of Education. From 1956 until July 1, 1995, the Ohio General Assembly mandated that the membership of the Ohio State Board of Education would be determined by the electorate. We had a completely elected 11-member board which was totally accountable to the voters of Ohio. However, in 1995, an amendment was added to the state budget to give Ohioans a hybrid board. The 11 elected members were retained; but the governor was given authority to appoint 8 additional members. This provision was signed into law with the budget on July 1, 1995. Since the creation of this hybrid elected/appointed board in Ohio, accountability of the board members shifted away from citizens to the executive branch of state government. In other words, the appointed members are directly accountable to the governor, not to the citizens of this state. This has contributed to the politicization of public education in Ohio.



Ohio PTA believes that the control of the public schools belongs to the people and must continue to be with the citizens whose tax dollars help support it. Ohio PTA supports an all-elected State Board of Education. We believe that this is the best model for the State Board of Education. We believe that elected boards encourage civic engagement and interest in public education, are a more transparent form of governance, ensure geographic representation, facilitate an open discussion of education issues and make state board members directly accountable to voters.

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