

Submitter: Travis Hunt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Senate Bill 1098, which seeks to strip local school boards of their authority to oversee and approve instructional materials, undermines the foundational principle of local control in education, a principle upheld in cases like *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), where the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the right of parents to direct their children's education.

Local school boards, as elected representatives, serve as a critical bridge between parents and educational systems, ensuring materials reflect community values. By centralizing this authority, SB1098 dismisses the historical precedent of decentralized governance, as seen in the tradition of local boards shaping curricula since the establishment of public education in the 19th century, and risks further alienating communities already skeptical of state overreach.

The current battle over parental rights, exemplified by widespread protests against perceived encroachments on family authority, highlights the dangers of SB1098. Parents, feeling their voices are being usurped, have increasingly challenged school policies, as seen in high-profile cases like *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.* (2021), which reinforced the importance of balancing school authority with individual rights. Removing local boards' oversight of instructional materials—a process that fosters parental engagement—would escalate these tensions, potentially driving more families away from public schools. The waning popularity of public education, evidenced by a 2024 Gallup poll showing only 36% of Americans express confidence in public schools, underscores the need to preserve local control to rebuild trust, not erode it further.

SB1098 threatens to exacerbate the disconnect between families and schools by imposing state-level control over instructional materials, ignoring the diverse needs of local districts. This move not only contradicts the collaborative spirit of education governance but also risks fueling the exodus to private or homeschooling options, as parents seek environments where their input is valued. By maintaining local school boards' authority, lawmakers can honor historical precedents, respect parental rights, and stem the tide of declining public school enrollment. I urge the rejection of SB1098 to protect the integrity of local education systems and the trust of the communities they serve.