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To: House Committee on Rules
From: Richard Donovan, Legislative Services Specialist
Re: House Bill 2038
Date: May 16, 2023

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, members of the committee:

On behalf of the OSBA membership, including 197 school districts and 19 Education Service Districts, thank you for the opportunity to express concerns with House Bill 2038, both the base bill and the -1 amendments.

Just last year, with the passage of HB 4114 (2022), school district board members were required to file annual Statements of Economic Interest. This requirement came into effect this year for the first time, and as far as we know, most school board members complied with this new requirement. However, some have not.

Anecdotally, at OSBA, we have received feedback from school board members that is critical of this new requirement. Often, the feedback comes from school district board members from our more remote and rural school districts, where school district board members live in small communities. And the feedback universally opposes the policy change to increase government oversight.

In 2022, OSBA testified with concerns with the passage of HB 4114, specifically with the potential negative impact on school board members and other members of the community from traditionally underserved or underrepresented groups of people. As we testified at that time, any increase in filing requirements or bureaucracy, including the requirement to put detailed financial information in another document, is potentially a further barrier to school board service.

School board service is a rewarding, volunteer responsibility that requires substantial personal commitment, both in time and in attention. HB 2038 would make filing requirements for SEI statements more rigorous. If HB 2038 were to become law, then we expect that some people will decide not to participate in school board service. Practically, this could make operations in some districts difficult if there are not enough school board members for a quorum. If the will of the committee is to move the bill, then moving the start date to a future year, perhaps 2026, could help give notice to potential candidates.