From: "Beth Lewis" <[redacted]sosarizona.org>
To: "Chad Campbell" <[redacted]z.gov>, Lourdes Peña <[redacted]az.gov>
Subject: Urgent Action Needed re SBE
Date: Mon, 20 Jan 2025 20:37:41 +0000
Importance: Normal

Hi Chad and Lourdes,

As you know, several members of the State Board of Education (SBE) appointed by former Gov. Ducey have been profoundly anti-public school in their words and actions. We are writing to urge Gov. Hobbs to take action quickly in order to achieve a pro-public education majority on the SBE. The SBE will be discussing critical issues this year, including revisions to the ESA Parent Handbook which they will discuss starting January 27. By passing strong regulatory guidelines in the Handbook, the SBE will be able to robustly increase transparency and accountability in the ESA voucher program where the state legislature is unwilling to put these reforms in statute. Additionally, the changes to the ESA voucher program in the FY25 state budget mean that the Arizona Administrative Code will likely be updated for the ESA voucher program by the SBE in the next few months.

Several members' terms expire today, January 20, 2025:

- Dr. Daniel Corr, President of the Board (serving as Community College President)
- Katherine Haley, Vice President of the Board (serving as a Public Member)
- Jason S. Catanese (serving as a Classroom Teacher)
- Jennifer Clark (serving as a Public Member)
- Julia Meyerson (serving as a Charter School Administrator)

Dr. Scott Hagerman (serving as a High School District Superintendent) has been serving past his term expiration of January 20, 2024.

Recommendations:

1. **We strongly urge Gov. Hobbs to keep Dr. Corr, Julia Meyerson and Dr. Hagerman on the Board, should they agree to continue serving.** All three members have a strong record of leadership during their service to the SBE and will provide a solid foundation for the Board as they take on tough challenges.
2. **We strongly urge Gov. Hobbs to remove Jennifer Clark and Katherine Haley from the Board immediately.** Ms. Clark is the CEO of Love Your School (LYS), an astroturf group which pushes vouchers and was founded by Cathi Herrod's Center for Arizona Policy as "an antidote for Red for Ed." LYS is currently funded by the Goldwater Institute and has affiliates of the Heritage Foundation and the Koch Network on its Board. Ms. Haley serves on the LYS Board as well as the American Enterprise Institute's Board. Both Clark and Haley have consistently voted against any additional transparency or accountability in the voucher program as members of the SBE.
3. **We recommend replacing Jennifer Clark with an ESA parent of a student with special needs.** Dr. Kathy Boltz, a small business owner and scientist, has deep knowledge of the program and a strong drive to pass needed reforms. *Dr. Boltz is willing to serve for one year if she is not confirmed. She can be reached at*[redacted].

[redacted]

4. **We recommend replacing Katherine Haley with a public school administrator, educator or staff member.** Our recommendation is Ms. Alison Bruening-Hamati (Tempe Elementary School District), who has served as a middle school and elementary school administrator for over 15 years and has the knowledge, character, and fortitude to lead the SBE in a strong direction. *Ms. Bruening-Hamati would be willing to serve for one year if she is not confirmed. She can be reached at* [redacted].
5. **We recommend replacing Jason Catanese with a classroom educator who has demonstrated leadership in the policy realm.** Mr. Catanese has not shown a drive to make changes in the ESA voucher program despite rampant fraud and abuse. In the August 2024 meeting, Catanese visibly struggled with the decision to revoke funding from an ESA parent for 3 dune buggies. We defer to your office and/or the Arizona Education Association regarding a nominee.

By following these recommendations, Gov. Hobbs can convert the State Board of Education to one that is strongly supportive of public school students and educators, which is in line with the Board's stated mission to "develop successful citizens through robust *public* education."

We hope your office will act quickly as the State Board's agenda for the January 27 meeting includes "Presentation and discussion of the process for developing the Empowerment Scholarship Account Handbook 2025" (item 6F).

Thank you for your consideration on this urgent matter,

Beth Lewis
Director, Save Our Schools Arizona
[redacted]
sosarizona.org

[redacted]