



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 110 Testimony
April 22, 2021

Good afternoon Chair Brenner and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Scott DiMauro. I am a high school social studies teacher from Worthington with 16 years of classroom experience, and I currently serve as President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of the more than 120,000 OEA members, we look forward to working with you on House Bill (HB) 110 to ensure that a high-quality public education, and the resources needed to succeed, are available for all Ohio's students. The following are some of our thoughts regarding the provisions of the budget bill:

School Funding

Ohio's current school funding formula is broken. Under the as-introduced version of HB 110, that methodology is frozen at FY 2019 levels resulting in every district remaining on either a foundation guarantee or gain cap. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical need for Ohio to create a new school funding formula and end the band-aid approach to a formula that is not driven by what constitutes a high-quality education. The absence of a functional formula is why OEA leadership and membership are encouraged and grateful that the Fair School Funding Plan (HB 1) is included in the House substitute budget bill.

OEA believes that Ohio should enact a student-centered formula that is equitable, adequate, predictable, and ensures that all students have the resources to succeed regardless of where they live or their family's income. Additionally, the school funding formula should directly fund vouchers and charter schools in a way that is fair to kids in both school districts and charters, as well as local taxpayers. The Fair School Funding Plan accomplishes these goals.

Additionally, educators know firsthand that students' access to integrated services and supports are critical to the social and emotional development and academic success of the student. OEA believes the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) builds upon and perfectly complements Governor DeWine's leadership on the importance of providing funding for these services and why OEA supports the Houses' inclusion of Student Wellness Funds into the funding formula.



We urge the Ohio Senate to retain the Fair School Funding Plan in the budget bill and provide for an equitable phase-in of all the formula's components. The goal should be to fully fund the formula as quickly as possible. It is time once and for all to move away from our unconstitutional funding system. OEA looks forward to working with members of the legislature to finally deliver the school funding system our children and communities deserve.

Student Wellness and Success Fund Expenses

The as-introduced version of the budget bill removes professional development regarding trauma informed care and cultural competence from the list of allowable expenses for Student Wellness and Success Funds. OEA is opposed to this change. The House substitute version includes the professional development programs as an allowable expense.

Ohio's student body is increasingly diverse, and our achievement gaps demonstrate that Ohio's African American, Hispanic, English learners, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities continue to lag academically behind their white, non-disabled peers. Students who were impacted by poverty, adverse childhood experiences, and homelessness prior to the COVID-19 pandemic have, in many cases, experienced increased poverty-related traumas. To address these achievement gaps and evidence of trauma, Ohio's educators need access to relevant cultural competency and trauma informed education professional development.

Whether the Student Wellness funds remain in the formula, or as a standalone program, these funds should continue to be used to address the nuanced learning needs of our increasingly diverse and impoverished student body.

Revised Graduation Requirements

As introduced, the Executive Budget called for requiring each student, as a condition of graduation, to provide evidence of having completed and submitted a free application for federal student aid (FAFSA). While we fully support making higher education more affordable and accessible for Ohio's students, including encouraging and providing support to students and families seeking financial aid, making completion of a FAFSA form a pre-condition of graduation we feel would present needless obstacles to some students. The House's recent substitute bill removed the FAFSA requirement, and we support that change.

Rather than requiring students to complete complex financial aid forms, we would urge greater financial support for higher education institutions so that kids' post-secondary options become the far more affordable options we had when my generation and earlier ones attended them. The average in-state tuition at an Ohio public four-year university has jumped an average of 120% since 2000, with

nearly every school now charging for in-state tuition more than what they charged out-of-state students in 2000 – sometimes a lot more. And in 2000, Ohio still ranked among the most expensive places to attend post-secondary options in the United States.

The bill calls for several additional changes to the high school graduation requirements for the Class of 2023 and beyond. OEA supports the provision to allow students to use a course grade of “B” or higher in associated courses as a qualification for the science and citizenship seals. Additionally, the House added a provision that eliminates the requirement for high school students to take the ACT/SAT beginning with the class of 2026. These assessments would continue to be offered to all 11th graders, but participation would be voluntary. OEA supports this change because it would still allow access to a free administration of the test; but not require it for those whose plans after graduation do not include college.

Academic Distress Commissions (State Takeovers of Local School Districts)

OEA supports the HB 110 provision extending the moratorium on new state takeovers through the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. State takeovers of local school districts are a failure. Grabbing power from elected school boards and sidelining the voice of classroom educators is the wrong approach to help school districts overcome barriers to learning associated with widespread student poverty and trauma.

The Ohio House acted last General Assembly to repeal the failed state takeover law by passing the bipartisan HB 154 (83-12). The HB 154 language was also included in the last House-passed biennial budget bill. Unfortunately, that language was omitted from the final version of the budget. HB 110 presents a new opportunity to turn the page on failed state takeovers by returning local control to elected school boards and restoring the voice of educators.

While OEA continues to call for full repeal of the failed state takeover law, OEA requests the Senate amend HB 110 to include the language from SB 165, which establishes a pathway for Lorain City Schools to exit state control under the HB 70 ADC/CEO system. However, the OEA asks that the SB 165 language also be applied to Youngstown City Schools and East Cleveland City Schools. It is important that all three districts in state takeover status be provided an equal opportunity to exit state takeover status so that local control can be returned to elected school boards and all collective bargaining rights returned to educators.

Computer Science Curriculum

House Bill 110 contains many provisions related to computer science course curriculum. The bill requires a committee to develop a state plan for computer science instruction for primary and secondary education. Secondly, it phases in a requirement that all K-12 students by the 2024-2025

school year have access to a computer science course offered by their school district or alternate provider approved by the Ohio Department of Education.

While OEA can understand the importance of offering computer science curriculum to students, we see many barriers to making this proposal a reality. OEA has identified the following initial set of concerns with the proposal: adequate staffing and training; lack of resources to pay for the computers and software needed to participate in the program; broadband challenges and accessibility; impacts on an already crowded curriculum; and how the needs of special education students will be addressed in the instructional offerings. Additionally, OEA believes that any alternate provider should be required to have non-profit status. No one should profit off the state's lack of resourcing to kids in local public schools.

OEA requests that the computer science provisions be removed from the budget bill and introduced as a stand-alone piece of legislation. This will allow for more time to fully explore the computer science options that currently exist and more thoroughly examine what could be offered in the future.

Educator Licenses

Continue salary/benefits during "inactivation" of an educator license: HB 110 requires the state superintendent to "inactivate" an educator license during the pendency of a criminal action (arrest/summons/indictment) for certain offenses. This action by the state superintendent would be in addition to the current requirement that a school district suspend an individual from duties involving the care, custody, or control of a child during the pendency of a criminal action. As a means of due process, OEA requests an amendment to clarify that a school district, school, or other employing entity shall continue to provide salary, benefits, and all other rights of employment during the period in which an individual's educator license is "inactivated" under this section.

Computer Science Licensure: OEA supports extending a temporary law provision for two more school years that allows a licensed educator in grades seven through twelve to take a professional development program approved by the district to be eligible to teach computer science, instead of being required to satisfy one of the eligibility requirements in permanent law (RC 3319.236: a computer science license, a license endorsement in computer technology and a passing score on a content examination, or a supplemental teaching license in computer science - leading to a full license in computer science). OEA requests an amendment to provide funding in HB 110 to reimburse educators and/or school districts for the cost of professional development programs that satisfy the temporary eligibility requirements to teach computer science.

Chair Brenner, this concludes my testimony. OEA looks forward to working with the legislature on making improvements to HB 110. I would be happy to address your questions.