

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
ON FY20-21 BIENNIAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today on Ohio’s PreK-12 education system, and the executive budget recommendations for the Ohio Department of Education. My name is Paolo DeMaria, and I am the superintendent of public instruction.

I want to start by saying, “Thank you!” Thank you for your support of education in Ohio. This committee and the General Assembly have recognized the critical role education plays in creating hope and a bright future for our children, our communities and our state. Your engagement is significant and very much appreciated. Thank you also to Gov. DeWine and Lt. Gov. Husted for their leadership and vision reflected in this budget.

Over the last decade, due to targeted and sustained education reforms and investments, Ohio and its students, families and employers are benefitting from an education system that is improving year after year. As I travel across the state visiting schools and interacting with students, educators, parents, business leaders and others, I see energy, commitment and amazing learning opportunities. But it is not time to celebrate these gains just yet; our vision is to ensure *each child is challenged, prepared and empowered* for future success. That vision anchors Ohio’s five-year strategic plan for education – *Each Child, Our Future*<sup>1</sup> – developed by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education, in collaboration with more than 1,300 stakeholders. Launched in August 2018, the plan seeks to guide development of state-level education policies and promote high-quality education practices across the state. Our plan has received a lot of positive support, and it forms a framework to guide Ohio’s continuing improvement toward excellence.

**EDUCATION SYSTEM AND BUDGET OVERVIEW**

Before I launch into the specifics about Ohio’s education accomplishments and essential programs, I would like to give a brief overview of the state’s education system and the executive budget funding recommendations.

The Department oversees an education system consisting of 610 public school districts, 49 joint vocational school districts, 52 educational service centers (ESCs) and 319 community schools. Ohio also enjoys a

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<sup>1</sup> <http://education.ohio.gov/About/EachChildOurFuture>

strong private (chartered nonpublic) school sector. There are more than 4,300 school buildings in the state, of which 41 are designated as STEM schools. Ohio's public schools enroll approximately 1.7 million students served by more than 108,000 licensed teachers and 314,000 credentialed education personnel, including teachers, principals, administrators, aides, counselors, coaches and other staff.

It takes more than \$23 billion in federal, state and local funding annually to operate Ohio's K-12 system. Gov. DeWine's proposed budget recommends GRF funding of \$8.4 billion in FY 2020 (an increase of \$313.8 million or 3.9 percent) and \$8.4 billion in FY21 (an increase of \$9.8 million or 0.1 percent) for primary and secondary education. Recommended support for primary and secondary education across all budget funds totals \$11.7 billion in FY20 (an increase of \$366 million or 3.2 percent) and \$11.8 billion in FY21 (an increase of \$83.1 million or 0.7 percent). These totals do not include Property Tax Reimbursements or Tangible Personal Property Reimbursements, which reflect an additional \$1.3 billion each year.

It is important to point out that most of these funds – 98 percent – flow to schools and districts as subsidy payments, with only 2 percent remaining for the Department's operations. Many of our operating dollars also directly or indirectly support the work of schools and districts.

While these amounts, figures and growth rates are important, how the dollars support programs and activities that influence the education and success of Ohio's children is just as crucial. I am excited to highlight for you the key areas that are driving our education system to excellence.

### **SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CLIMATES**

Gov. DeWine has prioritized new funding for primary and secondary education to support student wellness and success in school. The governor's budget recommends \$250 million in FY20, and an additional \$50 million in FY21 to provide a total of \$550 million over the biennium for this work. In terms of foundation funding, school districts will receive the same amount in FY20 and FY21 as they received in FY19. The additional funding in the foundation line items (GRF line item 200550 and Lottery line item 200612) will provide districts with additional resources targeting the non-academic barriers to success and addressing the needs of the whole child. This investment will be distributed to schools on a per pupil basis. Districts will receive between \$20 and \$250 for each student in FY20 and between \$25 and \$300 in FY21, with per pupil funding scaled based on federal census poverty data. The budget proposal recommends that every school district, community school and joint vocational school district receive a minimum of \$25,000 in FY20 and \$30,000 in FY21. This funding is paid directly to these entities based on where students are educated, without any transfers or deductions from students' resident districts.

Schools can use this additional funding for mental health counseling, wraparound supports, mentoring and after-school programs. Schools will be encouraged to partner with local organizations, including alcohol, drug and mental health boards; educational service centers; county boards of developmental disabilities; community-based mental health treatment providers; health departments; local departments of job and family services; and nonprofits with experience serving children. The intention is that by providing additional support in a targeted way and addressing the needs of the whole child, all students can have the opportunity for a brighter future. The governor was clear in his State of the State address that addressing the mental health needs of students is a priority for this administration, and the proposals in this budget set us on a path to fulfilling this commitment.

Partnerships with other state agencies and local entities are critical to supporting the well-being of Ohio's students. This budget recommends an \$18 million investment in evidence-based prevention curricula for Ohio schools – addressing the topics of drug and substance use, suicide and violence prevention – through the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and in partnership with local alcohol, drug and mental health boards. The proposed budget also recommends an additional \$2 million in the Department's budget to partner with Ohio's educational service centers to conduct professional development for teachers on prevention education.

This new investment in student wellness aligns with existing work, including school climate grants that support implementation of positive behavior intervention and supports frameworks and evidence- or research-based social and emotional learning initiatives. An additional \$4 million in funding is recommended for these purposes across the biennium. This funding, along with a \$3.5 million federal School Climate Transformation Grant the Department was recently awarded and the \$700,000 Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, supports our continuing efforts to improve school climate and safety.

The executive budget also recommends increased support for school safety in the Department of Public Safety's budget through increased funding for the Ohio Homeland Security's Safer Schools Tip Line and investment in analytical tools that can proactively alert local officials to threats.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

The Department's strategic plan, *Each Child, Our Future*, challenges our state to promote the importance of access to quality early learning experiences. I am very grateful for Gov. DeWine's prioritization of this work in the executive budget, because we know more students need this important experience.

Too often, children with disabilities and children who live in poverty arrive for kindergarten underprepared in language, literacy and math skills. Today, 48 percent of Ohio's children ages birth to 5 years old are living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The research is clear: investments in quality early learning yield high returns.

The governor's investment in the Early Learning and Development System includes funding and policies across six state agencies: the Ohio departments of Job and Family Services, Medicaid, Developmental Disabilities, Health, Mental Health & Addiction Services, and Ohio Department of Education, which all serve young children and their families. Each embraces a similar goal: to improve outcomes for children from birth through third grade so they are on track for a life filled with learning, and this budget promotes collaboration through evidenced-based strategies.

The Department's Early Childhood Education grants enable local providers to serve more than 18,000 children in high-quality programs. The governor's budget continues this level of service. Almost all of Ohio's publicly funded preschool and preschool special education classrooms (99.5 percent) have earned 3-, 4- or 5-star ratings in the *Step Up To Quality* rating system. Another 48 percent of children ages birth to 13 years old served in publicly funded child care are in rated programs; the goal is to reach 100 percent by

2020. These efforts are resulting in an increasing number of children who enter kindergarten demonstrating sufficient skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for success – increasing statewide from 37 percent in 2014 to 42 percent in 2017.

In the spirit of collaboration, I want to advocate for other state agency initiatives that support early learning and development. First, the executive budget recommends increasing appropriations to three critically important programs at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services:

- **Publicly Funded Childcare:** The budget invests \$198 million over the biennium in additional federal funding to improve the quality of Ohio’s publicly funded child care system. This funding will expand the *Step Up To Quality* child care rating system to increase the quality of childcare available across the state. The additional federal funds will be targeted to help providers recruit qualified educators and offer equal access to quality child care settings for more of Ohio’s children.
- **Ohio Books from Birth Program:** The budget also invests \$5 million over the biennium to create the Ohio Books from Birth program, which will ensure every Ohio child receives a monthly book to help spur their development and kindergarten readiness. One of the best ways to prepare children for kindergarten and future success is by reading to them every day.
- **Child Protective Services:** The state’s child protective allocation is increased by \$30 million per year and appropriates more than \$90 million annually. Because counties bear a disproportionate share of the cost for caring for these children, this additional funding will give local children services agencies resources and flexibility to provide for these children.

Second, the executive budget invests in increasing the availability of evidence-based home visiting programs to give children the best possible start in life. The Department of Health’s evidence-based home visiting program – Help Me Grow – is proven to help lower infant mortality rates, increase kindergarten readiness and improve parenting skills. As part of this initiative, the executive budget also creates the Pay-for-Success pilot program – a public-private partnership aimed at increasing the availability of home visiting programs.

Finally, I am glad to support Department of Developmental Disabilities investments in early intervention programs. Over the biennium, \$46.5 million will be focused on such programs to provide more children – including those with toxic lead exposure and neonatal abstinence syndrome – with the services and supports they need to grow into strong adults. These additional funds provide expanded eligibility for Early Intervention services and care coordination for eligible children.

Early learning should not be limited by the catch-all word “preschool.” Instead, our supports for child learning and development extend to innovative programs across state government. By recommitting ourselves to program collaboration and budgetary investments, expanded services for children will be more readily available and impactful.

### **CAREER AND POSTSECONDARY READINESS**

Once a child enters kindergarten, our goal is to nurture a love for learning and prepare the student for success in life and careers. We are committed to ensuring Ohio’s education system is structured so that students graduate from high school ready to succeed along their unique paths. Ohio’s strategic plan calls on

the state to rethink the high school experience, and this budget will build on that work.

### **Career-Based Learning Strategies**

Perhaps the most exciting change happening in education is the work we are doing – primarily in high schools – to connect students to careers. Career-based learning is a win-win. Students win because career-based learning means students are more engaged and, therefore, more likely to reach the significant learning outcomes that will enhance their future success. Businesses also win because more individuals are aware of the great jobs we have here in Ohio and emerge ready to contribute to our economy.

The budget recommends \$25 million in each fiscal year to support efforts to deepen the connections to careers in our education system. This includes supporting students earning in-demand industry credentials by paying the costs of credential applications and assessments. Many credentials can be completed in less than one year. These additional funds will quickly increase the number of credentials awarded, making students immediately employable or giving them a firm foundation for further education.

### **Computer Science**

Computer science education is receiving increasing attention in Ohio. We know the business community needs and expects computer science knowledge and skills from our graduating students. The State Board of Education recently developed learning standards and model curriculum for computer science. However, of the 378 active educators with computer science teaching licenses in 2018, only 141 are teaching computer science courses. The shortage of licensed computer science teachers is holding back our efforts.

This budget will set aside \$1.5 million to reimburse teachers for the costs of coursework and content exams needed to become licensed to teach computer science. The funds will assist nearly 900 currently licensed teachers.

### **College Credit Plus**

A decade ago, Ohio high school students had limited, inconsistent and fragmented opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. Today, Ohio's College Credit Plus Program helps students in grades 7-12 earn college and high school credits at the same time by taking college courses from community colleges or universities at no cost to the students or their families. Participating students take courses that count toward a degree pathway to maximize the value of their learning. In three years, College Credit Plus students have earned nearly 2,400 associate degrees and almost 1,200 certificates, while realizing more than \$410 million in tuition savings.

But, we can do more. One way to do that is to make more dual enrollment courses available in high school classrooms. This budget dedicates \$3 million for high school teachers to take graduate-level coursework to qualify to teach college-level classes. This will expand access to the program by offering more opportunities for high school students who may not be able to easily access courses on college campuses.

### **Other Programs**

We also are excited that a portion of the Department's budget includes additional funding for our partnership with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. These funds will serve additional students with disabilities to help them transition from school to work.

The governor's budget also includes continued funding for the trio of adult education programs

administered by the Department – the Adult Diploma Program, the 22+ High School Diploma Program, and High School Equivalency. These programs work hand in hand with adult educational programs funded through the Department of Higher Education, including the Aspire Program and Ohio Technical Centers. The two agencies work collaboratively to ensure adults find the best program to meet their specific needs and ensure a successful experience and outcome.

The Ohio Development Services Agency’s budget includes an expansion of the Diversity & Inclusion Technology Internship Program to high school students. This program, which currently is available only to college students, will expose high school students to technology professions.

We are excited about the continued commitment to career readiness and the partnerships that can be developed between businesses, schools, classrooms and communities to ensure a more prepared and entrepreneurial workforce.

### **QUALITY SCHOOL CHOICE**

Many students and families benefit from Ohio’s school options, and we continue to focus on ensuring students have quality choices. Participation in traditional EdChoice has more than doubled since 2009, from fewer than 10,000 students to more than 23,000 students today. The EdChoice Expansion program is targeted to economically disadvantaged students who do not qualify for traditional EdChoice. The budget funds the addition of sixth and seventh grades in the EdChoice Expansion program, expanding access to this program, and serving an estimated 16,000 Ohio students by the end of the biennium.

The budget also recommends \$30 million in each fiscal year to provide additional funding for community schools of quality. This funding recognizes the funding disparities that exist between traditional districts and community schools but targets additional funding to those community schools that are raising student achievement.

### **OTHER BUDGET ITEMS**

Before I close, allow me to highlight briefly a few additional items included in the proposed budget:

- **Accountability Systems:** Ohio school and district report cards give communities and families important information about the progress of their school districts’ achievements and are a key component of Ohio’s accountability model. This budget recommends \$7.5 million in FY20 and \$7.6 million in FY21 for continued programming and technology support for report card production. You may notice this appears to be a significant increase from the current year appropriation – but it is not. The proposed budget recognizes one-time non-GRF funds used for this work in the current biennium are no longer available. The budget reflects flat funding for report card production.
- **Innovative Shared Services:** This budget supports schools that are thinking creatively about how to streamline operations and employ cost-effective strategies for shared services. One million dollars in each fiscal year is recommended for a new grant program for schools that demonstrate innovative methods of cost savings and education through shared service programs.
- **Ohio State School for the Blind and Ohio School for the Deaf:** In addition to the other state agency partners mentioned throughout my testimony, I would be remiss if I did not mention my

support for the budget recommendations for the Ohio State School for the Blind and Ohio School for the Deaf. The work being done by Dr. Lou Maynus for the students of both schools warrants consideration during this budget process.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is an exciting time for education in Ohio! Thanks to the vision and leadership of Gov. DeWine and Lt. Gov. Husted, the General Assembly and the State Board of Education, we have an education system that is improving each year, and the great opportunity to take further steps to influence and ensure the success of Ohio's children. This executive budget tackles critical issues around student wellness, bolsters early childhood learning opportunities, and invests in activities to make sure graduates are ready for careers and postsecondary education. I look forward to working closely with the Finance Committee and the Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee to further explore the details of the Department's budget recommendations.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.