

House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
Testimony on HB 49
Presented by Darold Johnson, Legislative Director
Ohio Federation of Teachers
March 7, 2017

Chairman Cupp and Ranking member Miller and members of the committee, I am Darold Johnson, Legislative Director of the Ohio Federation of Teachers. OFT represents 20,000 members who are teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, higher education, and public employees.

I will address the following topics today: school funding, teacher licensing, and partnerships with business to prepare students for success, increasing early childhood opportunities, limiting vouchers and expanding career tech education and summer feeding programs.

SCHOOL FUNDING

The first and foremost item we have to address is the school funding formula. The Ohio Constitution requires a thorough and efficient system of common schools, and it is the state's responsibility to fund schools. Last week, you were briefed on the school funding formula. I am sure you would agree with me that it is a complex formula, and the budget process doesn't allow adequate time to fully revise it or simplify it. Since this formula is very similar to two years ago, I trust that changes will be made.

I appreciate the efforts of Rep. Patterson to have bipartisan discussions about the school funding formula. I hope that Rep. Cupp, as Chair of the Joint Education Oversight Committee, will focus on school funding as it did on transportation last year.

Quickly, I would say that the transportation formula is in need of revision since the Governor's budget makes serious cuts to this line item. Again, since transportation funding was the focus of the Joint Education Oversight Committee, I anticipate that changes will be made.

The following chart shows how our locals in Cuyahoga County are losing significant amounts of state funding.

SCHOOL FUNDING FOR OUR LOCAL IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY

County	District	GOV PROPOSED FY 18 –FY 19	Actual School Funding FY 10-11	Difference between FY 10- FY 18 funding
Cuyahoga	Beachwood City SD	\$3,195,907	\$10,900,042	-\$7,704,135
Cuyahoga	Berea City SD	\$28,725,497	\$44,559,079	-\$15,833,581
Cuyahoga	Cleveland Municipal SD	\$904,313,087	\$1,074,098,033	- \$169,784,946
Cuyahoga	Cleveland Hts-Univ Hts City	\$43,871,462	\$54,651,532	-\$10,780,070

SOURCE: Innovation Ohio

TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS, BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

We oppose the proposal that mandates that teachers have on-site work experience with a local business or chamber of commerce as a condition for renewal of an education license. While teachers may currently decide to do this as a pathway for license renewal, making it a requirement for renewal is impractical and is a one-size fits all approach to career readiness that in many cases simply is not the best approach. A better approach would be to reduce the amount of time spent on testing and test preparation so that teachers create more exposure to different careers and focus on lessons that engage students in authentic learning experiences. We also recommend business leaders spending time in the classroom to understand the challenges faced by both students and teachers and to talk with students about different career pathways. We also feel that state law already provides opportunities for businesses to influence local school board policy so the language to mandate three business leaders on each school board is not needed. Rather we see the business community as part of the overall stakeholder engagement that should be happening in school districts as a result of ESSA.

We believe a better approach to creating career awareness and readiness is exemplified in the *My Tomorrow* program in Cincinnati public schools.

No one knows the future completely. While we can anticipate the rising of the sun, we know at the same time technology has sped up change and shortens communications. Travel and business has become increasingly global. Yet, there will be constants values needed for life and work such as critical and creative

thinking on which we can build.

Realizing this Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) has created a plan working with the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce that seeks to prepare students to live and work in a world shaped by them. “That’s the driving force behind *My Tomorrow*, a new vision of education for CPS in which every student is prepared for the future. *My Tomorrow*, launched in 2014-15 in grades 7-8, now is being implemented at more grade levels in every school in our district.”

Are Students Ready for the Real World?

“There are the eight guiding principles that will ensure our students are, in the words of our rallying cry, Ready for the Real World:

- 1 **Higher Expectations** In order for students to meet tougher learning standards and compete for increasingly demanding jobs, they must be exposed to more rigorous content and performance expectations.
- 2 **Engagement:** The future is layered, networked and vibrant, so our students must be engaged socially, emotionally and intellectually — and at a deep level — to fully develop their talents.
- 3 **Collaboration:** The workplace is becoming increasingly collaborative, and it will be even more so in the future. So our students must be comfortable working in teams, sharing responsibility and making joint decisions.
- 4 **Real-World Connections:** The future holds many challenges, so our students must be exposed to real-world issues and their possible solutions, while being inspired by — and even consulting with — experts throughout the world.
- 5 **Technology:** The future promises to be only more wired (and wireless) and data-driven, so our students must be able to use information and communications technology to expand their knowledge and deepen their skills.
- 6 **Social-Emotional Learning:** In both the actual and digital realms, the future will be even more heavily networked, so our students must be able to expand their self-awareness, learn social skills and understand the hallmarks of wise choices.
- 7 **Critical Thinking:** The future offers an abundance of information and opinion, so our students must be able to analyze, synthesize and evaluate.
- 8 **Creativity:** The future is awash in opportunities and challenges, so our students must be able to generate new and novel ideas, conceive of alternatives and view things from different perspectives.”

Given, the values and principles outlined here, I hope we can all agree that they will meet the needs of the world our children will face. The world will change faster than we can even imagine right now, and while the Governor’s budget policy is driven by his workforce transformation plan, flexibility needs to be a core principle and not solely a focus on preparing for one career or job. However, his models for education are driven by private schools options and lack of historical perspective. We need to examine the public school choice that has existed for years that have waned due to funding cuts and a focus on testing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

OFT is concerned with the lack of greater investment in quality early childhood programs. Preparing children to enter school ready to learn is a key to making sure that all children are ready to learn. Investing in quality early childhood education programs yields significant benefits to the community, and with one in four of Ohio's children living in poverty and living in rural households with drug addicted parents getting an early start on learning is more important than ever. A RAND Corporation study outlines the benefit.

A RAND Corporation study entitled Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions key findings are as follows:

- Early childhood intervention programs have been shown to yield benefits in academic achievement, behavior, educational progression and attainment, delinquency and crime, and labor market success, among other domains.
- Interventions with better-trained caregivers and smaller child-to-staff ratios appear to offer more favorable results.
- Well-designed early childhood interventions have been found to generate a return to society ranging from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for each dollar spent on the program.

Topics of concern:

VOUCHERS

While studies show the effectiveness of investing in early childhood programs, different groups of studies do not show the effectiveness of vouchers. We do not favor vouchers for early childhood programs or as a school choice option. Ohio has five vouchers programs including one that is for parents who just want a voucher to attend a private school even though they have a quality public school option. Vouchers focus on the few and not the many more students who will attend public schools.

Research has consistently shown that voucher programs either fail to increase student performance or actually hurt student achievement. The CREDO study released by Fordham last year revealed that students who used vouchers performed lower on tests than their comparable peers in the public school system, even though the students using vouchers were less economically disadvantaged than their peers. Voucher programs lack accountability, fail to protect kids from discrimination and increase segregation. Since the 1990's voters have soundly rejected efforts to push these programs, including in Michigan. In 2000, Michigan voters rejected vouchers by a two to one margin for the second time.

CAREER TECH

Another area of concern was the lack of support for career tech education. The Governor's budget recommends a cut of \$1.3 million (10.5%) in FY 18 and .9 million (8.8) in FY 19. Career tech plays an important role in preparing students for work. We need better support these programs.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

The governor's budget flat funds this program. Ohio is a state with one in four of children living in poverty so the need for the program is great. Federal funds pay the majority of the expenses associated with the program. We should not flat fund this program. In fact, we should promote it and use it as a jobs and education program to prevent learning loss during the summer. According to the Ohio Association of Food Banks, 337,937 meals were served to hungry kids in summer of 2016. This means that many more children did not participate. There should be additional funds for expansion and promotion of the program.

TAX CUT

The Legislature should give homeowners a tax cut by reestablishing the property tax rollback provision. This will save homeowners 12.5 percent from the increase in their property taxes since it seems like the Governor's budget is relying on school districts to increase their property taxes to make up for lost GRF revenue.

Thank you Chairman Cupp for your invitation to speak. This concludes my testimony, and I welcome any questions the committee may have.

Early Childhood

Karoly, Lynn A., M. Rebecca Kilburn and Jill Cannon. Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005. As of Feb 15, 2017 http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9145.html.

Harrison Wein, Ph.D., Early Childhood Program Has Enduring Benefits, June 20, 2011, National Institute of Health.

Vouchers

Carnoy Martin, School vouchers are not a proven strategy for improving student achievement, February 28, 2017, Economic Policy Institute

Prothero, A. (2017, January 25). Issues A-Z: What Are School Vouchers and How Do They Work? Education Week. Retrieved Month Day, Year from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/school-vouchers>

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