



**House Finance Committee
Sub. House Bill 305 Testimony
Ohio School Boards Association
November 30, 2020**

Chairman Oelsalger, Chairman Callender, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute (Sub.) House Bill (HB) 305. I am Jennifer Hogue, director of legislative services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). OSBA represents public school district boards of education, career-technical center boards of education and educational service center boards of education.

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) would like to extend our sincere thanks to Speaker Cupp, Representative Patterson, Representative Scherer and the members of the Fair School Funding Plan workgroup for their time and work to develop the plan. Sub. HB 305 is a plan that meets the tenets laid out in the OSBA Legislative Platform and has our support. This is a plan that will deliver the adequate and equitable level of funding necessary to provide opportunities for all public school students across the state.

Base-cost funding

OSBA has long supported establishing a process for determining the components and costs of a high-quality education. The base-cost methodology contained in the bill is a product of deliberate, comprehensive work and seeks to address the needs of every child. The methodology is constructed in such a way that it can easily be adapted over time to adjust to the changing educational landscape.

Distribution/ State Share

When the Fair School Funding Plan was first introduced, OSBA had very real concerns about how the proposal would impact students in poverty, particularly those attending rural and urban districts across the state. We would like to specifically thank the sponsors and the workgroup for listening to our concerns with the distribution formula and making the changes necessary to alleviate those concerns. By removing the floor on the distribution, Sub. HB 305 allows additional funding to flow to low wealth districts who do not have the capacity to generate dollars locally.

Direct funding of students attending schools of choice

The current practice of deducting funding for charter and STEM school students from the state funds provided to traditional public school districts is unnecessary and confusing. We support the bill's move to fund students directly in the schools they attend.

Funding of districts currently on the cap

We welcome the move to provide additional funding for districts that are currently capped, especially fast-growing districts. We also appreciate the move toward making sure that districts receive at least the same per-pupil amount as chartered nonpublic schools in Ohio.

Categoricals and career-technical education

We are also grateful that the bill returns to a method of funding categoricals and career-technical education through a base cost weight. This will allow categorical and career-technical education funding to grow proportionately with the base cost over time.

Additionally, the bill requires studies on many of the categoricals, special education, English learners and gifted education. The continued study on these will further build upon the work of the Fair School Funding Plan workgroup.

Oversight Commission

Sub. HB 305 ensures that the formula will be revisited and improved over time by creating the School Funding Oversight Commission. This commission will evaluate the formula's implementation and make recommendations to the General Assembly. The bill specifies that the commission will include members of the Ohio House, Ohio Senate, superintendents, treasurers and parents. We respectfully ask that school boards members be given seats on the commission. School board members are locally elected officials who bring unique insight into the funding and operations of schools. We believe that this insight will be invaluable as the formula is reviewed and changes recommended for the future.

Transportation

Pupil transportation presents a significant challenge for many districts. In many areas of the state, students would face great challenges in getting to and from school were it not for the option to ride a school bus. Sub. HB 305 makes great progress in increasing funding to districts for pupil transportation. We also appreciate the funding provided in the bill for school bus purchase. This funding will help replace Ohio's aging school bus fleet by providing newer and safer buses for students.

Educational service centers

ESCs serve as a vital link and partner in the educational process. ESCs provide a wide variety of direct and support services, including curriculum development, staff development, technology assistance and special education services to the public school districts and students they serve. ESCs save the state of Ohio and school districts money through cost-effective, collaborative

ventures that expand equitable access to resources and maximize operating and fiscal efficiencies.

While we support the move to increase funding for ESCs contained in the bill through a tiered funding approach, we urge the committee to consider the amendment proposed by the Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA). OSBA believes that the OESCA proposal, developed by ESCs across the state, would better serve the needs of all ESCs now and in the future.

Closing

In closing, I would like to again express our appreciation for the bill's sponsors and the members of the workgroup for working with us to address our concerns. This is a formula that will provide increased adequacy and equity to serve the students of the state of Ohio well for years to come.

Thank you for your attention. Please feel free to contact us with questions.