

Joint Education Oversight Committee (JEOC)

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION
OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SENATOR LOU TERHAR, CHAIR
SENATOR PEGGY LEHNER, CO-CHAIR

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2019

2:30 PM

SENATE FINANCE HEARING ROOM

STATEHOUSE

COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

BIENNIAL OPERATING BUDGET 2020-2021

May 1, 2019

Good afternoon, Chairman Terhar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. Thank you for permitting me to give testimony on House Bill 166.

I am Lauren Monowar-Jones the Executive Director of the Joint Education Oversight Committee also known as JEOC. JEOC was created in the 2015-17 budget cycle, and consists of five House members and five Senate members. I was hired on June 15, 2016 and began work on July 11, 2016.

The Joint Education Oversight Committee has the same powers as other standing or select committees and meets at least monthly by statute. The role of JEOC, as stated in statute is to “provide continuing oversight of all state-funded activities in Ohio’s public education system. The committee will authorize a plan of work, which will include research, review, study and analysis of current or emerging education policy issues important to the state. The committee may select for review and evaluation education programs in school districts, other public schools, and state institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance in any form. These reviews and evaluations may include: assessment of the uses these entities make of state money they receive, determination of whether an education program meets its intended goals, examination of pilot programs developed and initiated in these entities to determine whether the programs suggest innovative, effective ways to deal with problems that may exist in similar entities. Additionally, the committee may review bills and resolutions regarding education that are introduced or offered in the general assembly and may prepare a report of its review.”

In the 132nd General Assembly, the committee authorized a plan of research that included eight projects. In 2017, three of these plans were prioritized. In June 2018, the first research project was completed and a report on the Early Learning and Development Programs was released.

As part of our work, JEOC staff attend public meetings on education policy in Columbus and around the state. In 2017 we attended 102 meetings and in 2018, we attended 109 meetings. These include meetings of the state board of education, the educator standards board, the early childhood

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advisory committee and many short-term committees that were developed to address ODE's strategic planning efforts, or collect feedback on graduation requirements, for example.

Another part of our work has been to respond to information requests from members of the General Assembly by providing research on topics of interest. In 2017, we responded to only a handful of requests, but in 2018 we responded to almost 20 such requests.

In addition to that work, the staff of the JEOC have written seven briefs and six reviews of research that have been posted on our website and distributed to members. These research products are short, focused on a recent issue in education that is before Ohio legislators and present unbiased information to legislators about a topic in education policy.

As you know, the Joint Education Oversight Committee has met three times this General Assembly so far, and has decided to engage in research on the report card. We have already had two meetings on this topic. In the first meeting, two independent researchers presented the results of their research on the report card in 2016, just after the new format of the report card was released. At the second meeting, we heard from various stakeholders about the details of the Achievement component of the report card. As you know, we plan to have six more meetings on the topic of report cards, addressing each component of the report card as well as the how the overall grade is determined. These meetings will presumably resume when there is time in the schedules of legislators.

For the 133rd General Assembly, the JEOC staff continue to attend public meetings relating to education policy as time permits. Additionally, we attend House and Senate committees that hear legislation about education to be informed about the issues in front of legislators. We also spend time reading what is in education news streams and research journals. To support legislators in their work, we attempt to find the connections among these and present them to legislators for their consumption.

As new members have joined this committee and new issues in education arise daily, I confer with the Chair of the Committee to determine the

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priorities in the work of the office. Currently, the office is working on a range of research issues that our members and other members of the General Assembly have asked us to provide more information about. The JEOC staff are attempting to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the General Assembly members and we have already responded to more research requests this year than in 2018 in its entirety.

For the upcoming biennium, the requested JEOC budget is \$376,663 for FY2020 and \$378,668 for FY 2021. This budget includes funding for the three positions with a 2.5% cost of living increase for the staff effective July 1 of each year.

Approximately 91% of JEOC's appropriation is used for staff, 3% is for supplies, maintenance and equipment and 6% is for purchased personal services. The current staffing level for JEOC includes three positions: the Executive Director, a Researcher and a Fellow. The JEOC Fellow position is modeled after the LSC Fellow position and affords JEOC a full-time staff member who can both perform the administrative tasks and contribute to the research on a part-time basis.

This budget also includes funding for a Higher Education Fellow position, which is a new proposed position to enhance our productivity and engagement with higher education. The charge of JEOC is to oversee the Pre-K-12 education system as well as the higher education system. We are proposing to create a new position similar to the JEOC Fellow position, but for higher education faculty who are on sabbatical. The idea is to get more educators from institutions of higher education involved in education policy in Ohio. Since professors who are awarded a sabbatical have access to resources for funding for their sabbatical year, we are proposing to offer a space to work, parking and possibly a one-time relocation expense up to \$2500 for the individual to be a part of the JEOC research team. In this way, we hope to engage more of the research capacity in Ohio with helping to inform education policy in Ohio. If our budget is approved and our committee agrees to the new position, we would hope to hire our first Higher Education JEOC Fellow for the 2019-2020 school year.

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I believe this budget will allow JEOC to meet its current statutory responsibilities, goal and objectives.

Thank you Chairman Terhar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the committee and I would be willing to answer any questions you may have.