



Joe Miller
State Representative House District 53

HB 516 Sponsor Testimony

I would first like to thank Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and the members of the House Finance Committee for allowing me to speak in support of HB 516. HB 516 is a simple, 2 page bill that will solve an issue that I am sure many of you have been hearing about from the educators in your districts.

During the 2008 financial crisis, the legislature came to the State Board of Education and informed them that they needed to postpone increasing licensure fees for educators until the economy stabilized, otherwise they would take legislative action to establish fee amounts in code. The Board agreed and the fee amounts have stayed the same since. The State Board of Education has been put in a difficult place as the pause seemed to be originally intended to occur for roughly 8 years, and because the other funding sources they have relied on have been taken away as per last year's operating budget addition of a standalone budget for the Board. Due to the Operating Budget changes, the Board's only sustained funding line items are via educator licensure fees and RAPBACK fees.

To ensure that they can carry out their mandates, the Board either needs to increase fees substantially or we need to step in to make them whole. During last year's Operating Budget, the Executive and House agreed to propose appropriating \$10M as a short-term funding solution to this deficit, but the Senate stripped it out and the enacted version did not make the necessary restoration.

Currently, the State Board uses licensure fees for a variety of reasons. The deficit will result in the Board's inability to enter contracts with DEW for administrative and HR services, staff layoffs, and potentially moving buildings. Additionally, due to the cutbacks, the Board does not employ in-house legal counsel to represent them against lawsuits, they rely on the AG to appoint them counsel. The fee increase will dramatically increase the amount that educators are spending out of pocket each year and could contribute to deterring new educators from joining the workforce and potentially push current one's out due to the cost.

To quote from an advocacy email that I have received from constituents:

“As an educator and constituent, I am asking you to protect hard working teachers from unfair license fee increases of up to 75%. Unless the Ohio General Assembly acts to fully fund the State Board of Education, these costs will be passed onto the backs of hardworking teachers. For example, five-year license fees may skyrocket from \$200 up to \$350. Higher fees will make it harder to find and keep qualified teachers. Please stop the unfair license fee increase on teachers by fully funding the State Board of Education.”

Thank you again to Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee for allowing me to speak on HB 516. We have already approved this solution in last year’s Operating Budget, let us act again to resolve this issue. I will be happy to field any questions.

