



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
House Bill 33 Testimony
March 22, 2023

Good morning, Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. My name is Scott DiMauro. I am in my 32nd year in education, which includes 16 years in the classroom as a high school social studies teacher. I currently serve as President of the Ohio Education Association (OEA). On behalf of the 120,000 members of the OEA, we look forward to working with the members of the Ohio legislature to ensure all of Ohio’s students, regardless of where they live, their race, or their family’s income, have the resources and supports needed to thrive and succeed. The following are some of our positions regarding the governor’s proposal in the budget bill.

School Funding

I would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to the members of the 134th General Assembly who supported and secured passage of the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) in House Bill 110. The Fair School Funding Plan provides a transparent, student-centered formula that is based upon how much it costs to educate a child and how much a local community can afford to contribute towards these costs.

The Executive Budget proposal continues the phase-in (years 3 and 4) of the funding plan and provides a modest increase in core support for school districts. However, the proposal continues to use base cost components based on FY 2018 data while the local share of funding (property and income values) is based on more current data. This results in a disparity in support, with the local share of funding education increasing and the state responsibility decreasing.

This imbalance is illustrated in an analysis completed by the Ohio Education Policy Institute (OEPI) that shows that the state’s cost to fully implement the FSFP in FY 2023 drops by \$373 million compared to FY 2022. This decrease in the state share of funding is a direct result of updating the local capacity side of the equation but not cost inputs such as school employee salaries. The result is an increase in the burden borne by local communities and is in opposition to the DeRolph decision that says the state should move away from an over-reliance on local property taxes to fund Ohio’s schools. Simply put, the FSFP works best when all of its components are current and adjusted in concert with one another.

OEA also believes strong consideration should be given to the recent cost study recommendations regarding funding of students with disabilities and English learners released in December 2022.



Additionally, in FY 2023, roughly 48% of Ohio's children attending traditional public schools are identified as economically disadvantaged, yet efforts to authorize a state-commissioned economically disadvantaged cost study have failed in past general assemblies. An economically disadvantaged cost study is a critical component to improving resources and supports needed to increase the educational outcomes of these students. OEA requests the authorization for this cost study be included in House Bill 33.

OEA believes it's Ohio's time to fulfill its commitment to students, communities, and public schools by updating and fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan.

School Bus Purchase

House Bill 33, as introduced, eliminates the school bus purchase line item. OEA is opposed to this \$50 million removal. Ohio's School Bus Purchase program provides critical financial support to school districts for the replacement of older model year and high mileage school buses within their transportation fleet. In FY 2022, more than 760,000 students rode a school bus, and over 380 districts applied for the school bus purchase grant. OEA requests that funding be restored for this important need.

Expansion of Voucher Eligibility

As introduced, HB 33 proposes an expansion of eligibility for EdChoice vouchers. Based on family income, HB 33 would increase eligibility from 250% of poverty under current law (\$75,000 for a family of four), to 400% of poverty (\$120,000 for a family of four). OEA opposes this provision of the bill.

Approximately 90% of Ohio's students attend public schools. As outlined earlier in my testimony, policymakers have an opportunity and an obligation to update and fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan. The proposed massive expansion of voucher eligibility undercuts the ability of the state to fund public schools fully and fairly. Largely, this increase in voucher funding will go to students who are already enrolled in private schools but would become newly eligible based on the change.

While we support the right of parents to determine the best education environment for their children, we do not think that Ohio's taxpayers should be forced to pay for that choice. EdChoice eligibility already extends to students based on the report card rating of their home school or for families with income below 250% of poverty. I will note that the current eligibility is higher than eligibility for Medicaid, free or reduced lunch, and means tested programs.

Before considering any further expansion of vouchers, I urge you to update and fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan. Stand up for our public schools which are open to all Ohio students, meet state standards, publish report cards on student performance measures, are accountable for taxpayer dollars, and serve the vast majority of Ohio's students.

Quality Community Schools Support Fund

The budget proposes to significantly increase funding for the Quality Community School Support Fund. It would provide, outside of the school funding formula, an additional \$3,000 for each economically disadvantaged student and \$2,250 for each non-economically disadvantaged student. This is a proposed increase of \$1,250 for both classifications of students. OEA opposes this provision. More than 10% of traditional public school districts do not even receive \$2,250 per pupil in state funding.

Literacy Provisions

The budget contains a number of provisions aimed at improving literacy. The ability to read is the gateway to learning. OEA wants each student to develop strong reading skills and unlock a lifelong love of reading.

The bill as introduced calls for the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to gather information on the core curriculum and instructional materials in English language arts and reading intervention programs. Having this information will be useful in helping to ascertain what is being done throughout Ohio and what the results of these various programs have been. That said, children learn differently and at different rates. Lawmakers should be wary of one-size-fits-all solutions.

The bill calls for the Department of Education to establish a list of high-quality core curriculum and instructional materials aligned with the science of reading. Not later than the 2024-25 school year, each school district would be required to utilize curriculum and materials only from that list. Under current state law, curriculum and materials used are a local decision, so we recommend against mandating top-down curriculum decisions that are traditionally under the purview of local school districts.

The bill would also require every K-12 teacher to complete a course in the science of reading and evidence-based reading instruction provided by ODE. We certainly appreciate recognition of the importance of professional development and the resources to support it. Before knowing the cost or time needed to train all educators in the science of reading, we believe more information is needed on how many are already trained and using instructional practices grounded in this research. Importantly, in order to ensure that a state training program is not simply a compliance exercise and in recognition of differences in local capacity and need, we strongly advise flexibility in the implementation of any kind of training program. Issues such as when the training should take place and how much teachers should be paid to participate should be subject to bargaining at the local level. To truly gain buy-in from the people most needed to implement effective instructional practices, the voices of educators at the local level must be an integral part of collaboratively moving toward ensuring all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Finally, we urge the House to remove language in the bill explicitly prohibiting any specific instructional strategies. We believe that quality professional development and curriculum, if implemented with fidelity, will achieve the desired aim of language that bans the so-called “three cueing” method. Codifying that language is unnecessary and may lead to unintended consequences, including opening educators and schools to nuisance lawsuits.

FAFSA Requirement

The Executive budget calls for each student to provide evidence of having completed and submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as a requirement for high school graduation. OEA opposes this provision. While OEA fully supports making higher education more affordable and accessible for Ohio students, including encouraging and providing support to students and families seeking financial aid, making completion of a FAFSA form a pre-condition of graduation may present needless obstacles for some students.

Educator Shortages - Teacher Preparation and Licensure

Teacher Apprenticeship Program: OEA supports the proposal that the Chancellor of Higher Education, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, develop and implement a newly established Teacher Apprenticeship Program. To support this new program, the budget: Appropriates \$4 million for (1) program development; (2) program participant support, including payment of tuition, fees, and apprentice salary; (3) stipends for supervising teachers; and (4) administrative and technology support. Apprenticeship programs offer increased pathways for becoming a licensed educator.

Alternative Military Educator License: While OEA does not support the active military license provision as currently written in HB 33, we would be supportive of a proposal to require the State Board of Education to establish an articulated pathway for military personnel (active and/or veteran) within the existing alternative, temporary, and traditional pathways. The articulated pathway will, while maintaining the safety of students and necessary pedagogical training to effectively educate K-12 students, seek to expedite the process. The department will train and assign existing staff to support the unique needs, barriers and timelines of military individuals seeking licensure in Ohio.

Pre-service teacher permit: This provision requires the State Board of Education to establish a pre-service teacher permit that shall be required for an individual who is enrolled in an educator preparation program in order to participate in any student classroom teaching or other training experience that involves students in grades PK-12. OEA recommends the following changes to the pre-service teacher permit proposal:

- OEA recommends the state make the pre-service teacher permits available at no cost to the aspiring educator (e.g. permit fees, background check fees, etc.)
- Ensure individual Education Preparation Programs (EPP) continue their consultation with local districts to determine the requirements for candidate status within EPP programs and requirements for fieldwork.
- Limit the pre-service substitute teaching license for the sole purpose of allowing EPP candidates who have completed a minimum of 50% of their EPP program satisfactorily, to serve as occasional substitute teachers with a limit on number of hours each week. Allow each EPP to determine if substitute teaching activities may count towards program requirements and any applicable cap.

- Limit the pre-service license to one year, limited to candidates enrolled in an Ohio Higher Education Department accreditation program who have completed a background check, and may be renewed once. Candidates who have not maintained enrollment in the EPP program and/or taken courses within one year, will be ineligible for the license renewal.
- Authorize school districts to provide compensation and other benefits to individuals holding a pre-service license who are engaged in student classroom teaching or other training experience that involves students in any of grades pre-kindergarten through twelve that is required for completion of the program.

Competitive Teacher Pay – Increase State Minimum Teacher Salaries

Ohio must make certain all students have access to high quality, dedicated educators by creating a comprehensive set of solutions to the educator staffing crisis. Over the course of much of last year, OEA convened a group of members from across the state to participate in an Educator Voice Academy (EVA) on Teacher Recruitment and Retention. In September of 2022, the EVA released a comprehensive set of recommendations to address teacher shortages. OEA believes those solutions must include an increase in state minimum teacher salaries, so the education profession does not get left behind in the competition for talented individuals.

OEA is proposing an increase in the state minimum teacher salary from \$30,000 to \$50,000, with state support to local school districts to fund necessary salary increases. For the 2021-2022 school year, Ohio's average starting salary for professional educators with a bachelor's degree and no prior experience was \$38,942, ranging from \$28,000 to \$49,585, depending on the school district. Of the 566 districts with salaries in OEA's database, 351 (62%) had starting salaries below \$40,000, and 215 (38%) had starting salaries above \$40,000.

In conclusion, we believe that public education in Ohio matters. Across our state, public schools are the heart of our communities. Ohio must ensure that all children have the opportunity for a quality education and resources that allow them to reach their full potential. Chair Richardson, this concludes my testimony. OEA looks forward to working with this committee and the legislature on making improvements to House Bill 33. I would be happy to address your questions.