



**Alliance for High Quality Education
House Bill 33 Proponent Testimony
House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
March 23, 2023**

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on House Bill (HB) 33, the main operating budget bill for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 and 2025 biennium. My name is Anthony Podojil, Ph.D., and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for High Quality Education.

The Alliance is a consortium of 73 high-performing school districts located throughout the State of Ohio. For more than 30 years, the Alliance has represented its members' interests on matters of state education policy and funding, as well as contributing to fostering high-quality educational opportunities for students in their districts and those across the state.

Literacy

We are proud to support Gov. Mike DeWine's creation of a comprehensive statewide literacy strategy. Without a strong foundation in this area, our young learners will be unable to make progress towards comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, and other important areas along their educational journey.

The Alliance is greatly appreciative of the \$174 million in state aid to support districts' purchase of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, professional development, and other key areas. Many times, we witnessed the passage of new state mandates without a corresponding increase in state aid and, for Alliance districts, funding those initiatives fell squarely on our local taxpayers. These funded mandates in HB 33 will assist schools in increasing literacy achievement for all students in Ohio.

One item the Alliance would like policymakers to consider surrounds the pipeline of new teachers coming into our classrooms without this training. We urge the legislature to take the additional steps necessary to ensure Ohio's colleges and universities are preparing the teachers of tomorrow in these literacy strategies that are aligned to the five major components identified by the Science of Reading, including Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Fluency that contribute to a comprehensive literacy program. This will ensure our newly graduated teachers will be adequately prepared to begin their instructional careers upon entering their first classrooms.

School Funding

With limited exceptions, the Alliance continues to support the Fair School Funding Plan, its continued phase in, and updating of the base cost inputs. A longstanding concern held by our members relates to the formula's continued use of a 5% minimum funding floor. The Alliance believes that the current minimum funding level is an arbitrary figure that can and should be reasonably increased over time. In FY 2023, 70 school districts have a state share percentage between 5% and 10%, and an additional 39 districts are between 10% and 20%. Alliance districts are at the lowest end of the spectrum when it comes to state aid per pupil, bottoming out at \$410 per pupil. The median state aid per pupil for Alliance districts is \$1,669, compared to the statewide median of \$5,837. This floor also contributes to 27 of our public-school districts in Ohio receiving less state aid per pupil than every chartered nonpublic school receives – approximately \$1,362 per pupil in FY 2022.

The Alliance proposes increasing this floor to 10% in fiscal year 2025 with future increases subject to the approval of the General Assembly, not to exceed 20%.

As other aspects of the formula are updated, the Alliance believes updating the formula's guarantees must be taken into consideration, as well. The current formula includes two guarantees that prevent a district's total state aid from falling below certain amounts. The first – temporary transitional aid – is based on FY 2020 funding levels, and the second – formula transition supplement – is based on FY 2021 funding levels.

The Alliance proposes updating the fiscal years for the guarantees as has been tradition with prior formulas.

OFCC Facilities

The Alliance believes strongly that the state must increase its support to our higher capacity districts who often “go it alone” and fund their building projects without or with very little state support. The Alliance supports increasing the minimum state share for Ohio Facilities Construction Commission building projects to 25% in limited instances, including providing facility capacity for all-day kindergarten. Ensuring every district in the state can provide all-day kindergarten and other high-quality early childhood education programs will help jumpstart the state's commitment to improving literacy proficiency and meeting each child's individual needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. The Alliance looks forward to working with the General Assembly and the DeWine-Husted administration as the budget process continues. I am happy to address any questions you may have at this time.