



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

**House Bill 33 Testimony  
Ohio Senate Education Committee  
May 10, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Brenner and members of the Senate Education Committee. 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 provisions of the House-passed 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 continued the phase-in (years 3 and 4) of the funding plan and provided a modest increase in core support for school districts. However, the proposal continued to use base cost components based on FY 2018 data while the local share of funding (property and income values) was based on more current data. This proposal resulted in a disparity in support, with the local share of funding education increasing and the state responsibility decreasing which 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.

The Ohio House of Representatives made the necessary update to the school funding formula by using FY 2022 data for the base cost components while continuing years 3 and 4 of implementation of the funding formula. This shows that the FSFP works best when all its components are current and adjusted in concert with one another. We urge the Ohio Senate to retain the House changes to the Fair School Funding Plan.

**Economically Disadvantaged Cost Study**

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. This is why OEA supports the House authorization and funding for an economically disadvantaged cost study and requests that it remain in the bill.

### **Expansion of Voucher Eligibility**

As introduced, HB 33 proposed an expansion of eligibility for the income based EdChoice voucher to 400% of the federal poverty level. The bill passed by the House increased this threshold to 450% (\$135,000 for a family of four). OEA opposes this provision of the bill.

Approximately 90% of Ohio's students attend public schools. Policymakers have an opportunity and an obligation to update and fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan. Voucher expansions undercut the ability of the state to fund public schools fully and fairly. This increase in voucher funding will largely go to students who are already enrolled in private schools but would become newly eligible for vouchers based on the change.

While we support the right of parents to determine the best education environment for their children, we do not think 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 income-based 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.

### **Literacy Provisions**

The budget contains several provisions aimed at improving literacy. The ability to read is the gateway to learning. OEA supports the increased focus and financial support for literacy initiatives. There is a lot to like in this area, but there are also a few areas of concern.

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 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. We appreciate recognition of the importance of professional development and the resources to support it. We strongly advise flexibility in the implementation of any training program. It is unwise to require all K-12 teachers to take such a course. Issues such as when the training should take place and how much teachers should be paid should be local decisions subject to bargaining.

Finally, we urge the Senate 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 result. We request the language that bans the “three cueing” method be removed from the bill. Codifying this language may lead to unintended consequences, including opening educators and schools to nuisance lawsuits.

### **Eliminate Mandatory Student Retention**

OEA supports language added by the House that would repeal mandatory student retention under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. OEA members firmly believe that high-stakes decisions should not be based on test scores. Inclusion of this language will allow educators, in consultation with parents, to make decisions in the best interests of students. Further, the bill would eliminate the state mandate to administer the third grade ELA test two times during the year. This is a positive step towards reducing testing, allowing more time for teaching and learning in the classroom. OEA enthusiastically supports these provisions and urges them to be maintained within the bill.

### **Dyslexia Professional Development**

The as-introduced version of the budget bill proposed to insert a July 1 date, instead of using current law that states the “no later than the beginning of the school year” by which classroom teachers would need to complete the required 18 hours of dyslexia professional development. OEA has heard concerns from members who plan to use the summer to complete the training and are frustrated with the last minute change.

OEA supports the House-passed version of the budget bill that returns the 2023 deadline for grades kindergarten and first grade teachers to “at the start of the school year” and changes the 2024 and 2025 deadline for teachers in grades two and three and grades four through 12 respectively to complete their professional development to September 15.

### **School Meals**

Ohio’s educators know first-hand that healthy meals are essential for student learning. Access to nutritious food has been shown to help children succeed both academically and socially in school. According to the Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio policy paper, “School Meals Support Ohio Student Health and Learning,” one in six Ohio children live in households that have hunger challenges and more than one in three children live in households that do not qualify for school meals.

The Ohio House took the important first step of making school breakfasts and lunch accessible to more children by having the state cover the cost between free and reduced-priced meals. OEA requests your support for this provision and recommends that the Ohio Senate build upon this proposal to cover universal breakfast programs in our schools.

## **FAFSA Requirement**

The House-passed version removed a proposed requirement for high school students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to graduate. Instead, the language requires schools to include instruction on the FAFSA as part of the financial literacy requirements for graduation. OEA supports the House-passed language. We fully support making higher education more affordable and accessible for Ohio students, including encouraging and providing support to students and families seeking financial aid. However, making completion of a FAFSA form a pre-condition of graduation may present needless obstacles for some students.

## **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

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. OEA supports a variety of provisions in HB 33 designed to alleviate growing teacher shortages.

OEA asks the Ohio Senate to KEEP the following provisions:

- Increase state minimum teacher salary to \$40,000 (discussed further below)
- Teacher Apprenticeship Program (alternative pathway to licensure)
- Pre-service teacher permit (student teaching permit/allows substitute teaching)
- Grow Your Own Teacher Program (scholarship funds for teaching)
- Loan repayment program (high-needs subjects/low-performing schools)
- Reforms to the Ohio Teacher Residency Program/Resident Educator Summative Assessment, e.g., reduces the resident educator license from four to two years (the program has already been reduced to two years) and prohibits limits on the number of times an individual may take the summative assessment.
- Includes “teachers” on the list of “in-demand” jobs eligible for state support/incentive programs operated by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

OEA asks the Ohio Senate to ADD the following provisions:

- Increase the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000.
- Require ODE to design and implement an annual teacher shortage data survey for school districts.
- Expressly authorize student teachers to be compensated by school districts.

OEA also asks the Ohio Senate to REMOVE the following:

- Remove HB 33 changes to educator license grade bands (preK-8 and 6-12) and revert to current grade bands (pre-K-5, 4-9, or 7-12), which were initiated into law by the Ohio Senate just four years ago (SB 216; 132<sup>nd</sup> G.A.; M. Huffman). After a major rework of teacher preparation programs to align with SB 216 (132<sup>nd</sup> G.A.), the grade bands in current law are now in place. A major change to grade bands so soon after SB 216 (132<sup>nd</sup> G.A.) is likely to create unnecessary confusion amongst licensure applicants and prevent an opportunity to evaluate the impact of

the current grade bands. Further, the grade bands proposed in HB 33 have raised a variety of teacher preparation concerns from the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (OACTE), State University Education Deans (SUED), and the Ohio Association of Private Colleges for Teacher Education (OAPCTE).

### **Competitive Teacher Pay – Increase State Minimum Teacher Salaries**

Ohio is falling behind when it comes to supporting the work of educators. Efforts to alleviate the teacher shortage should give special attention to increasing the state minimum starting teacher salary. The Ohio General Assembly places great demands and expectations on teachers. In turn, teachers deserve to be fairly compensated for the vital work they do on behalf of students, our state, and the country as a whole.

OEA asks the Ohio Senate to maintain the House-passed increase in the state minimum starting teacher salary to \$40,000. OEA further requests that the Ohio Senate give consideration to increasing the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000, a level that has been implemented in a variety of states across the country under both Republican and Democrat leadership. In Ohio, the average starting salary for professional educators with a bachelor's degree and no prior experience is \$38,942, with starting salaries ranging from \$30,000 to \$49,585. Of the 566 districts with salaries in OEA's database for the 2021-22 school year, 351 (62%) had starting salaries below \$40,000, and 215 (38%) had starting salaries above \$40,000.

Without meaningful action by the Ohio General Assembly, the teaching profession in Ohio is increasingly at a disadvantage in the competition for talented individuals inside and outside of our state. On behalf of Ohio's students, we ask for your support to help keep great teachers in every classroom.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we believe that public education in Ohio matters. Ohio must ensure that all children, regardless of where they are from, have the opportunity for a quality education and resources that allow them to reach their potential. Chair Brenner, this concludes my testimony. OEA looks forward to working with this committee and the Ohio Senate on making improvements to House Bill 33. I would be happy to address your questions.