



AN ALLIANCE OF OHIO'S URBAN SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHER UNION PRESIDENTS

**Senate Education Committee
Interested Party Testimony HB 33
Offered by Paul Palomba**

**Co-Chair of the Ohio 8 Coalition & President of the Canton Professional Educators Association
5/10/2023**

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chairman O'Brien, Ranking member Ingram and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Paul Palomba, Co-Chair of the Ohio 8 Coalition and President of the Canton Professional Educators Association. I am here today on behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition. We are an interested party testifying on HB 33. For brevity, our testimony begins with in eight succinct priorities and related positions that outline matters that are of most interest and concern. The balance of our testimony goes into more detail as needed.

Budget Priorities & Positions

- 1. SUPPORTS the Fair School Funding Plan:** maintain the House action that updated the base amount from 2018 to 2022; complete the study related to costs and economically disadvantaged students and to make the existing temporary law **permanent law** to ensure the plan's long-term viability.
- 2. AGAINST Vouchers:** and their expansion. Senate deliberations indicate a willingness to 'means test' vouchers. This is a welcome first step. Subsequent steps should include transparency and accountability related to those institutions that receive public funds be subject to the same mandates as public schools such as sunshine laws, 5-year financial forecasts, and the provision of special education and transportation services. There is a letter attached to my testimony that goes into more detail on this issue.
- 3. SUPPORTS Transfer of School Records:** maintain the House action that includes a requirement to transfer records and transcripts within 5 days of a student departing a private or parochial school.
- 4. With specific changes SUPPORTS Science of Reading:** including continued funding to support existing professional development efforts and establishing specific standards to qualify as an Ohio Department of Education literacy coach.
- 5. SUPPORTS Student Wellness and School Based Health Center funds:** as outlined the Executive Budget.
- 6. Transportation changes:** although more detail is available in my testimony document, key changes to Transportation related deadlines, establishing a regional transportation pilot and eliminating the backlog of transportation complaints at the Ohio Department of Education is critical. Existing amendments from the House do not assist in resolving these challenges.

Provisions being deliberated and might be considered for inclusion in the budget

- 7. AGAINST the Backpack Bill:** This sets up an entirely separate educational structure that is duplicative, costly, and is an unproven model.
- 8. AGAINST House Bill 1:** which will reduce revenue dedicated to schools, parks, first responders, and/or sectors reliant upon property taxes.

LEGISLATIVE POSITION DETAIL

- 1. Fair School Funding Plan:** The Governor’s Executive Budget has suggested a continued phase in of Years 3(50%) and 4(66%) of the 6-year Fair School Funding Plan. The House continued support for the Fair School Funding Plan by updating the base year for inputs to 2022.

POSITION:

- 1. We support updating the base amount from 2018 to 2022 funding levels.
 - 2. We support completing the study related to costs to educate economically disadvantaged students, which is the only study that has not been completed.
- 2. Vouchers:** For the past 20 years, the voucher program has expanded from a limited program for students of a particular income level to one that, at 400% of FPL, would include 80% of all students in Ohio. The House raised the level further to %450 FPL. This means that a family of 4 making \$165,000/year are now eligible
 - a. Vouchers remain unproven and are counter to the concept of public education.
 - b. Voucher funds can be used for private, parochial, and charter schools which do not have the same accountability regarding the use of public funds.
 - c. Under this expansion, some children already in non-public schools will use taxpayer dollars to supplant their existing tuition payments.
 - d. The cost of this expansion could be as high as \$172 million per year but only \$25 million is included in the budget.

POSITION:

- 1. Ohio 8 does not support the continued expansion of vouchers.
 - 2. There must be accountability for public funds used for vouchers including but not limited to reporting the use of those funds by each school that receives such funds.
 - 3. Require that public record laws apply to school buildings, charter school, private school and parochial schools that accept voucher funds including but not limited to organizational budget documents, board meeting minutes, and any financial information that is required of traditional public schools to produce within the context of public record requests.
 - 4. Reporting of academic performance of students receiving voucher funds- this provision is included in the House version of HB 33.
- 3. Transfer of School Records:** Currently, if a student has been enrolled in a non-public school, that school can hold their records and transcripts if they still owe fees, which can prevent them from graduating. The House added language that would require all schools to transfer records within 5 days.

POSITION:

- 1. The Ohio 8 supports the amendment language from the House

4. Literacy Initiative: Science of Reading: The Governor’s Executive Budget recommends the use of evidenced based literacy instruction and educator professional development; funding to support literacy coaches; educator and administrator professional development and dyslexia screenings.

POSITION:

1. The Ohio 8 already utilizes evidenced based literacy instruction and educator professional development utilizing the science of reading pedagogy and is supportive of this recommendation.
2. Funds dedicated to literacy instruction and professional development should be allocated to districts already deploying science of reading including \$1,200 stipends for K-5 teachers, English language arts teachers in grades 6-12, intervention specialists, and instructional coaches and \$400 stipends for middle and high school teachers in other subject areas.
3. Literacy coaches deployed by ODE should have at least:
 - a. 10 years of teaching reading as a reading specialist
 - b. Proven track record of successful experience as a literacy coach
 - c. Proven and successful experience is defined as higher-than-average peer reviews as well has at least annual unannounced observations of that coach during that experience timeframe.
 - d. Experience must be in the same type of school districts in which they will be placed

5. Student Wellness and School Based Health Center funds: Funding in the Governor’s Executive Budget provides funding for mental health services, including telehealth services and physical health care services, including telehealth services. Additionally, The Department of Education will support school-based health centers in partnership with the Ohio Department of Health with a line of \$15M per year.

POSITION:

1. The Ohio 8 supports the Governor’s Executive Budget Student Wellness funding for student behavioral and physical health needs around the state.
2. The Ohio 8 supports Governor’s Executive Budget funding to support school-based health centers in partnerships with ODH.

6. Transportation:

a. Communication Deadlines

- April 1st-Community chartered nonpublic school establish their school's start and end times for the upcoming school year and provide such start and end times to each city, local, or exempted village school district that the school expects will be responsible for providing transportation services
- April 1st-Community chartered nonpublic school provide their district contact names, phone and emails for the summer and for the upcoming school year to each city, local, or exempted village school district that the school expects will be responsible for providing transportation services.
- May 1st: Charter non publics provide student rosters requiring transportation

- July 1st: Charter non public provide updated student roster requiring transportation
 - July 30th: Home district provides/gives access to detailed route plans
 - September 1st: Charter non public provide updated student roster
 - Sept 1st, December 1st, March 1st, June 1st: Charter non public provide updated student roster on a quarterly basis or within 10 days of a new student enrolling in a school
- b. Regional Transportation Pilot:** With appropriate funding, identify two Educational Service Centers that are willing to establish a two-year transportation pilot to test the concept of a regional K-12 transportation structure covering either multiple school districts or charter/nonpublic networks.
- c. ODE Staff for District-Student Due Process Submissions and Backlog:** Presently, there is a 3–6-month backlog at the Ohio Department of Education. Additional staff must be dedicated to these challenges so that resolution for all parties is timely and penalties accurately reflect non-compliance. Funding needs to be set aside so that ODE can hire at least three staff that are dedicated to eliminating the existing backlog on or before December 1, 2023. These individuals must have at least 5 years of public transportation management experience including but not limited to managing and/or supervised transportation operations at a public school district or a regional public transportation operation.
- 7. House Bill 1:** Existing law strikes a balance between taxation and the generation of funding for entities that rely on tax revenue for core services such as cities, school districts, police, fire, and emergency services. The Ohio 8 is extremely concerned about the provisions of HB 1 for the following reasons:
- a. Under current law, when a school district passes a school levy the amount raised stays the same, regardless of typical property valuation increases.
 - b. While a homeowner could pay more as the property value increase, they don't; and the mills (the unit to pay for school levies) stays the same – this is the outcome of another existing law – HB 920.
 - c. Ohio has committed to supporting the Fair School Funding formula. Passing HB 1 would mean that students and families will suffer the consequences. At a time when the state is flush with funding, putting an additional burden on residents should not be tolerated.
 - d. Millage numbers would have to increase in order to raise the same amount of money – right or wrong, when you hear 40 mills vs 10 mills, human nature means you will be less likely to support a school levy.
 - e. The likely outcome of this change will be to annually reduce the assessment percentage for property resulting in a loss of revenue for all local governments who rely upon property tax revenue.

POSITION:

1. The Ohio 8 is opposed to all provisions of HB 1 as it will have the effect of raising local property tax burdens while also reducing the money coming to schools, parks, first responders, and/or sectors reliant upon property tax.
- 8. Backpack Bill:** This sets up an entirely separate educational structure that is duplicative, costly, and unproven for the following reasons:
- a. Duplicative: All essential operational and administrative burdens to track student placement/movement, transportation needs, academic performance and intervention, and compliance duties for any student taking advantage of the backpack bill would be placed on the home school districts. We are seeing this now with transportation services which are past the breaking point due to the number of buildings to which students must be transported along with inefficient rules that guide the program. This would be compounded with things like tracking students, administrative engagement of each and every school that accepts a backpack student, and tracking special education services.
 - b. Costly: The Legislative Service Commission has estimated that this bill would cost \$1 billion to implement. This aligns what we are seeing with transportation funding compared to reimbursements rates. And this would be just the starting point before adding functions such as special education services and other administrative and operational functions.
 - c. Unproven: While a few other States have passed similar legislation, there is no data to prove the effectiveness of such a structure nor has there been any studies related to the impact on student achievement

POSITION:

1. The Ohio 8 rejects any and all Backpack related concepts

[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor, and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to shape education policy.