



House Education Committee
House Bill 523 – Proponent Testimony
Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO)
February 24, 2026

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill (HB) 523, the *Future Educators Support Act*.

I am Katie Johnson, Executive Director of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO). Our members are public school district treasurers/CFOs and school business officials responsible for managing district finances to ensure long-term fiscal stability in our schools.

OASBO supports HB 523 as a meaningful step to strengthen Ohio’s educator pipeline.

Supporting the Teacher Pipeline

Ohio’s public schools continue to face workforce shortages, particularly in high-need subject areas and geographic regions. Student teaching and other required field experiences are critical components of preparation, yet they can present financial barriers for aspiring educators balancing unpaid placements with living expenses and licensure costs.

HB 523 provides practical tools to reduce those barriers by:

- Permitting districts to compensate student teachers at no less than minimum wage;
- Allowing districts to offer healthcare benefits on the same terms and conditions as teachers;
- Requiring, to the extent funds are appropriated, a cost-of-living stipend and test fee reimbursements based on financial need;
- Authorizing state institutions of higher education to lower or waive certain tuition and fees during student teaching or similar field experiences; and
- Requiring that teachers be included on Ohio’s in-demand jobs list

These provisions recognize both the workforce challenge and the financial realities facing future educators.

The Importance of Permissive Language

From a fiscal and operational standpoint, the permissive nature of the district provisions is critical.

Districts *may*, but are not required to, compensate student teachers or offer healthcare benefits. This ensures decisions remain local and aligned with each district’s financial capacity, staffing needs, and long-term forecast.



If a district elects to compensate student teachers or extend benefits, it will do so with full awareness of the associated costs and in alignment with its financial forecast and operational framework. This flexibility preserves local control while creating opportunities for innovation and partnership with educator preparation programs.

Healthcare and Collective Bargaining Considerations

The bill permits districts to offer healthcare benefits to student teachers “on the same terms and conditions” as teachers. As drafted, this remains a local decision.

Should a district choose to provide such benefits, implementation would necessarily occur within the parameters of:

- Existing collective bargaining agreements,
- Board-adopted policies, and
- The district’s health insurance plan design and eligibility rules.

Districts that engage in this option would ensure compliance with labor agreements and fully evaluate long-term cost implications before moving forward. The permissive structure appropriately allows districts to determine whether such arrangements are feasible and sustainable.

State-Funded Support

We also appreciate that the cost-of-living stipend and test fee reimbursements are contingent upon appropriated funds. If the General Assembly elects to appropriate funding, clarity regarding the funding source, distribution method, eligibility verification, and administrative procedures will be important to ensure smooth implementation and avoid unintended administrative burdens.

Conclusion

HB 523 provides flexible tools to support future educators without creating unfunded mandates for school districts. By preserving local discretion and conditioning state support on appropriations, the bill balances workforce investment with fiscal responsibility.

OASBO appreciates the sponsor’s work and looks forward to continued collaboration.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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