

## OCSS Written Testimony on SB1

### Amending the Revised Code related to teaching financial literacy in high school

Chairperson Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jim O'Connor, President of the Ohio Council for the Social Studies. I have been a social studies classroom teacher at Princeton High School, located near Cincinnati, for the past 27 years. I was a department chair for 16 years before moving into OCSS leadership positions. My degrees are from the University of Cincinnati and Wright State University. I served in the Ohio Air Force National Guard from 1986-2006. In 2012, the University of Cincinnati Center for Economic Education named me "Financial Literacy Teacher of the Year."

The Ohio Council for the Social Studies (OCSS) is the state's premier voice for K-16 history and social studies professionals in Ohio. We are strong supporters of the teaching of financial literacy in our state's high schools. In fact, Ohio social studies teachers have the strongest presence in regards to the instructional delivery of financial literacy in the state. We also must note the state standards in *Economics and Financial Literacy* are found in the Ohio Department of Education Model Curriculum for Social Studies.

(<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Social-Studies/Model-Curriculum-for-Social-Studies>)

We thank SB1 sponsors, Senators Wilson and McColley, and SB1 co-sponsors for their commitment to strengthening financial literacy in high school classrooms. It is exciting to see a wave of bipartisan support for investing in educators to best prepare youth for a financially fit future. Though we strongly support the goal and intent of SB1 to mandate a semester course of Financial Literacy as a graduation requirement, the OCSS cannot support the SB1 as currently written and introduced. **Our current stance on the matter is an Interested Party because we have two concerns.**

Our first concern is SB1 is the educator "licensure validation" in financial literacy. For Social Studies educators, we find this mandate to be redundant, expensive, time-consuming, and unnecessary. Current Social Studies education majors at Ohio's universities and colleges must already complete coursework in Financial Literacy and must pass a state Ohio Assessments for Educators (Social Studies: 025) exam that has financial literacy content on it to earn teacher licensure. This content is aligned to the in-place Financial Literacy Learning Standards. However, we do understand the value of requiring a licensure validation for those teachers that have not demonstrated competency in financial literacy.

Outside of passing the required accredited coursework and the existing state exam, this new state mandate would create a third layer of state bureaucracy and cost for licensed AYA Social Studies teachers. In line with the many proponents that have submitted testimony on Senate Bill 1, we believe all students today must have the tools and skillset to build a strong financial future.

As young adults learn to make strong financial decisions, this strength and growth will support households, communities, our state, and our country. We fully support students having to complete a .5 stand-alone unit in financial literacy as a high school graduation requirement.

However, **we suggest an exemption for licensed AYA Social Studies Educators from the “licensure validation” requirement when teaching the financial literacy mandate.**

The second OCSS concern centers on the requirement that this .5 semester-long financial literacy class comes out of the 3 units of social studies required for high school graduation. This would significantly harm the number of social studies elective courses offered to students by high schools. Currently, students must have 3.0 units (one unit means one full year) of prescribed social studies to graduate. In practice, if this bill passed, most districts would divide these three units as follows:

- 1 full unit-credit of American History due to testing (required .5 course)
- 1 full unit-credit of American Government due to testing (required .5 course)
- 1 full unit-credit World History/World Cultures (required .5 course)

This reality may force districts to cut a half year out of American/World History or American Government. Further this leaves no room for subjects like Geography, Economics, Law-Related Education, Psychology, and others. Thus, **we suggest this financial literacy requirement come out of the elective graduation hours instead of social studies elective hours.** Since teachers from several different curriculum areas will be teaching this course, it is logical to have the elective hours come out of the 5 elective hours.

There have been constructive conversations with the sponsors on an expected substitute bill that addresses our concerns. With these changes to the Bill, we believe this legislation would be a win for the state of Ohio as young adults become productive and responsible citizens who manage their money and financial matters with knowledge and purpose as informed decision-makers. We would proudly support such a substitute bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.