



The Ohio School Counselor Association

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Proponent Testimony on HB 1
Sara Hoffman, President
February 23, 2021

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy and members of the House Finance Primary & Secondary Education Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share the Ohio School Counselor Association's support for HB 1, historic legislation that would enact a new school funding formula.

OSCA appreciates the years of work Speaker Cupp and the sponsors have put into thoughtful consideration of all the components of this new formula. We know there can never be a perfect solution to the problems HB 1 attempts to solve. However, the proposed formula's reliance on costs associated with the "whole child," including social/emotional needs, instructional supports and other necessary indirect costs, indicates that the calculations are likely the closest they have ever been to being fair and accurate. In addition, school counselors' work is constantly focused on addressing the needs of the "whole child," so we appreciate the recognition of all of the support and investment this worthwhile approach requires.

OSCA's support for HB 1 is primarily based on the bill's recommendation that 15% of a school's funding be dedicated to "instructional and student supports," including a 250:1 student-to-staff ratio for social/emotional/security support personnel. School counselors are already spread far too thinly across Ohio's schools, with an average student-to-school counselor ratio of 453:1. Having to manage the academic, social/emotional and career development needs of 453 students every day becomes an unsustainable triage situation. Further, some Ohio schools have zero full-time school counselors, leaving gaping holes in critical support services for students in need. School counselors are the ones tying all the pieces of the educational support spectrum together – often the one trusted adult advocating for all students across every area of education. They are often the first to identify mental health needs or even physical conditions that require additional referrals. Their intimate knowledge of students' personal circumstances, level of academic progress and emotional wellbeing make them a critical tier in that support system. And, of course, given escalating levels of anxiety and stress among students right now, they are needed more than ever.

In light of that, OSCA greatly appreciates HB 1's proposed 250:1 investment in social/emotional support personnel, which we hope will be school counselors. A 250:1 student-to-school counselor ratio has been OSCA's ideal goal for years, but we know it will take dedicated financial investment. OSCA believes students' social, emotional, academic and career success is worth that investment, however. Our young kids would be much better off if we had more time to spend providing thoughtful, personalized support to each of our students.

Thank you again for your consideration of OSCA's perspective on HB 1.