



**House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
House Bill 110
Ohio School Boards Association
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
March 4, 2021**

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on House Bill (HB) 110, the biennial budget. I'm Jennifer Hogue with the Ohio School Boards Association. Joining me for this testimony and in answering your questions are Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials. Our organizations represent public school district, career technical education centers and educational service center boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials from around the state.

School funding

We appreciate that Governor DeWine's budget proposal continues to recognize the social and emotional needs of students through his proposed increase in the Student Wellness and Success Funds (SWSF). However, our members remain concerned that the budget bill continues to flat fund schools without a funding formula. We appeared before you last week to voice our strong support of House Bill 1, the Fair School Funding Plan. As we highlighted in our testimony, the Fair School Funding Plan has the support of over 1,000 school district leaders representing over 500 school districts across the state, and these numbers continue to grow. We stand here today asking you to amend HB 1 into the budget bill as the funding mechanism for Ohio's schools. Doing so would provide a fair, predictable and reliable means of meeting the needs of students including their social, emotional needs. In fact, the same services targeted in the SWSF are included in the base cost calculation of the Fair School Funding Plan.

Academic distress commissions

The Governor's proposal also includes a prohibition on any new academic distress commissions being appointed during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. This is a great first step in correcting the problems that surround academic distress commissions. We urge you to keep this provision in the bill.

Transportation

HB 110 also contains many changes with regard to student transportation, several of which are problematic. Rather than implement these drastic changes, we urge the committee to instead remove the transportation provisions from the bill, and replace them with the transportation provisions that are included in HB 1, the Fair School Funding Plan. We offer the following suggestions should the subcommittee be inclined to keep the provisions in the bill rather than replace them with the language in HB 1.

The bill would require that students with late enrollment in community or private schools be scheduled on a bus within 14 days. Not all districts can make this deadline. If a new student does not live along an existing route, a route has to be modified and the other students riding that bus will have to be given notice of stop and time changes. An additional problem is that when notice is given during the month of August, transportation offices are at the busiest point of their year. It is not always possible to drop

everything to give priority to a late enrollment. We suggest that rather than 14 days, the language state that transportation assignment should occur as soon as possible.

HB 110 would also restrict the use of public transit. This change will remove a resource that has been available for public schools since school transportation was first mandated. While in a perfect world, we would like all students to have access to yellow school buses, there are simply not enough yellow school buses or drivers available to absorb all of the students that currently ride public transit. If this change occurs, school districts will have to divert yellow buses currently used to transport high school students and K-8 students who live less than two miles from school to instead serve students currently riding public transit. This will result in a net loss of transportation service for many students and their families.

The bill would also require the impractical to transport parent notification be copied to the State Board of Education. This communication to parents is already required and is provided to ODE if and when a parent files an objection to the resolution. Requiring the letter to be copied to the State Board when issued does not solve a problem, but instead creates additional, unnecessary steps in the process.

New language in HB 110 would also change the deadline for community schools to notify districts that they intend to transport their students to August 1. This is very late in the process for the notification to occur. Many districts begin their work in March to determine routing decisions as well as staffing and bus inventory needs. The current deadline is January 1. If a date change needs to occur, a more reasonable selection would be March 1 to coincide with the district's preparations for the next school year.

Student transportation is a challenge because it is an area that has been underfunded for the past few years. The need for transportation service has continued to grow even while funding in this area has been reduced. We firmly believe that the provisions and funding provided in HB 1, the Fair School Funding Plan, will provide the needed changes and funding to make available greater efficiency and increased service.

Computer science education

We also appreciate Governor DeWine's foresight to provide opportunities for students in computer science education. However, without appropriate funding, it will be difficult for districts to create new programming while meeting the staffing requirements for these courses. We urge the committee to remove the provisions related to computer science from the bill, and instead introduce separate stand-alone legislation that can be crafted with input from stakeholders while providing the resources necessary to implement programs and courses that will serve students well.

Graduation requirements

The bill also includes several changes to Ohio's graduation requirements. We again ask that these provisions be removed and considered separately from the budget. This will allow for a robust discussion on the impact of these changes, especially since provisions in the bill would create separate graduation requirements for different types of schools.

The bill also includes a requirement that students complete the FAFSA as a requirement for graduation. The bill would allow parents to opt out of completing the forms and districts to provide a record of circumstances that make it impossible or impractical for the student to complete the requirement. The FAFSA is a cumbersome document, and there is merit in having students complete the FAFSA to see what types of aid would be available to them to make post-secondary education a reality. However, this need not be a graduation requirement. Instead, resources should be provided to districts to support parent outreach and to connect districts with stakeholders in their communities who can help parents navigate and complete the FAFSA.

Resources for dyslexia resources

We want to again thank Representative Baldrige for working with us during the last General Assembly to enact legislation regarding screening and services for students with dyslexia. HB 110 retools the state's diagnostic assessments in reading for grades K-3 so that they can be used as a screener for

students with dyslexia. This will help districts with the costs associated with implementing Tier I screening requirements from HB 436 of the 133rd General Assembly. However, we remain concerned about the resources needed to provide Tier 2 screening tools, to implement new multi-sensory structured literacy programs, to certify teachers in those programs, to provide meaningful professional development for all teachers K through 12, and to implement necessary interventions for students identified as having dyslexia. We ask that you consider providing additional dollars to cover the costs associated with implementing HB 436.

Chair Richardson and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your time and attention. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Suggested Transportation Provision Changes