



# OEA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 135<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY



## **Fully Fund the Fair School Funding Plan**

OEA supports updating the components of and full funding for the Fair School Funding Plan. The bipartisan funding plan adopted in Ohio's last budget bill (HB 110) provides a predictable student-centered formula that is based upon how much it costs to educate a child and how much a local community can afford to contribute toward these costs.

The funding plan was intended to be fully implemented over six years to provide \$1.9 billion in additional state revenue for Ohio's students. However, when adopted, it was only funded through the end of the current biennium (June 30, 2023).

Ohio lawmakers have a tremendous opportunity to build upon the foundation of the Fair School Funding Plan by guaranteeing it is fully funded in the future. Full implementation of the plan will ensure that all children regardless of their zip code, race, or family income will be given the resources needed to thrive and succeed.

## **Recruit and Retain Qualified, Committed Educators for Every Public-School Student in Ohio**

The growing educator staffing shortage crisis requires a comprehensive plan to strengthen Ohio's recruitment and retention strategies for classroom teachers and educational support professionals. OEA recommends a range of policy solutions to alleviate the educator shortage crisis, based on the research of its Educator Voice Academy (EVA) on Teacher Recruitment and Retention, including a proposal to raise the state minimum teacher salary to \$50,000. OEA has convened a new EVA to develop recommendations regarding staffing shortages in the broader education workforce, such as substitute teachers, classroom aides, bus drivers, and other education support professionals necessary to serve the learning needs of students.

## **End the Expansion of Private School Voucher Programs**

OEA is opposed to the expansion of current voucher programs or the creation of new ones. Vouchers drain needed resources from the 90% of students who attend public schools. Diverting resources from public schools has real consequences such as larger class sizes and reduced opportunities for students. Further, there is no compelling evidence that vouchers improve student achievement. OEA is adamantly opposed to the creation of a universal voucher system such as the proposed "backpack bill."

## **Repeal Mandatory Student Retention Under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee**

Educators know that high-stakes decisions about students should not be based solely on performance on a standardized test. The mandatory retention policy robs educators and parents of input in these decisions. This is detrimental to students. For this reason, OEA supports the repeal of the mandatory retention provision of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Other aspects of the law such as diagnostic testing, identification of struggling readers, and focused student interventions should be maintained.

## **Support Student and Staff Well Being**

Educators know that student wellness is fundamental to their ability to learn and succeed. OEA believes that Ohio must start treating mental health like physical health – a basic need for all. Our students and educators must receive the mental and emotional health support they deserve. OEA supports schools having the resources, staffing, and programs necessary to effectively address these challenges.

## **Protect the Voice of Educators - Support Unions and Defend Collective Bargaining Rights**

Educators join together in unions to more effectively communicate the needs and challenges that exist in local classrooms and school buildings. Effective unions improve the working conditions of educators and the learning conditions of students. OEA supports the voice of educators by defending Ohio's public employee collective bargaining law.

