

Legislative Watch

Legislative Watch – June 20, 2023

Ohio Senate Passes Budget Bill

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee accepted a 2,100-page omnibus amendment to House Bill (HB) 33, the state budget bill for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. The bill passed the Ohio Senate Finance Committee on June 14, 2023, along party lines. The Ohio Senate passed the bill the following day, on June 15, 2023, with a vote of 24-7, also along party lines. The Senate's version of the bill is dramatically worse for public education and Ohio's students than the version passed by the Ohio House earlier this year.

The Senate Finance Committee accepted a standalone amendment from Senator Cirino (R-Kirtland) which folded the provisions of Senate Bill 83, the Higher Education "Destruction" Act, into the budget bill. These provisions represent the largest attack on collective bargaining rights since Senate Bill 5 in 2011 and will censor honest and truthful education in our institutions of higher learning.

Also added to the bill was an amendment that would require school districts to provide academic intervention services to any student who scores "limited" on any state assessment in math, science, or English language arts. These services can be provided directly by the district or through a vendor but must be free of charge for the student. OEA believes that this provision will place an outsized importance on standardized test scores over classroom work and creates an unfunded mandate for school districts.

Several additional provisions regarding school vouchers were added to the bill. Among them is a change in law that will allow private schools to charge tuition over the voucher amount to students under 200% of the federal poverty level. This, coupled with universal eligibility for vouchers, belies the notion that privatization has anything to do with providing opportunities for poorer students. With these changes to HB 33, the Senate is prioritizing providing taxpayer funded vouchers to upper-income families who already send their children to private schools over adequately funding public schools that serve 90 percent of Ohio's students.

On a positive note, the bill now contains a provision that dissolves the Lorain City School District (Lorain CSD) academic distress commission (ADC) and academic improvement plan

immediately upon the effective date of HB 33 (policy provisions effective 90 days after Governor signs bill).

The Ohio House is expected to not concur with the changes made to HB 33 by the Ohio Senate, sending the bill to conference committee for final negotiations. As the budget heads to conference committee, OEA's top priorities remain enacting the Fair School Funding plan as passed by the Ohio House, stopping the assault on unionized college employees and higher education, enacting provisions to address Ohio's educator recruitment and retention challenges, and stopping the expansion of school vouchers. Now is the time for Ohio's policymakers to appropriate funding and enact policies that support public school students and educators.

OEA will continue to keep members informed throughout the process and provide ways to make your voice heard on these critical issues.

More information regarding major provisions of the omnibus amendment can be found [here](#).

OEA calls on the Ohio House to not concur with Senate changes to HB 33. Please call the Statehouse switchboard at 1-800-282-0253 and ask to be connected with your State Representative's office to urge that they vote "NO" on concurrence with the Senate changes to HB 33.

Trans Sports Ban (HB 6) Joined with Gender Transition Prohibition Bill (HB 68)

Before being voted out of committee, legislation that would prohibit gender transition services for minors (HB 68) was amended to include provisions from HB 6, a bill that would ban transgender females playing on all-female sports teams at the high school and collegiate level. OEA opposes both bills because they contribute to hostile and unsafe environments for LGBTQ+ students.

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