



Week of Feb. 20, 2023

House Bill 1 update

Tony and Will this week met with key policy staff in House Speaker **Jason Stephens'** office to discuss House Bill (HB) 1 and outline our members' concerns, especially as Alliance members are disproportionately and negatively affected by the bill's massive funding cuts. Additionally, Will attended a meeting Wednesday with more than 20 local government organizations to discuss the bill. The meeting was a positive step in building a coalition of local governments impacted by the bill. The group will reconvene late next week to discuss a potential coalition strategy on responding to the bill. Tony and Will have also had many discussions with lawmakers this week with more scheduled next week to educate them on the bill and its impact on Alliance members.

The first hearing on HB 1 will occur next week on Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 1:30 p.m. in the House Ways and Means Committee during which Rep. **Adam Mathews** will provide sponsor testimony.

OBM releases school-funding spreadsheets

The Office of Budget and Management on Wednesday released school-funding spreadsheets for school districts and joint vocational school districts (JVSDs) detailing the proposed funding amounts for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 under Gov. **Mike DeWine's** executive budget proposal. The funding proposal is subject to change, as both the House and Senate will make modifications to the funding formula throughout the budget process. [Click here](#) to access the funding simulations for traditional districts and [here for JVSDs](#).

Senate committee hears support for Senate voucher proposal, amends ODE restructuring bill

The Senate Education Committee this week heard testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 1 and SB 11, continuing its swift deliberation on the bills to restructure the Ohio Department of Education and State Board of Education and to establish a universal voucher program, respectively. Tony also provided written interested party testimony on SB 1, [accessible here](#). A vote on SB 1 may occur next week.

Before taking witness testimony, the committee accepted three amendments that contain provisions for which Tony and Will advocated. They include:

- a requirement that each deputy director be an individual with "appropriate educational, professional, or managerial experience;"
- a requirement that the Director of the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) hold monthly recorded public meetings on DEW initiatives, recent state or federal law changes, or administrative rules, and provide an opportunity for public discussion during such meetings;
- a requirement to establish a stakeholder outreach process by which the DEW Director must work with affected parties throughout the administrative rulemaking process.

Backpack Bill to receive hearing next week as House committee work gets underway

The inaugural meeting of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee took place Tuesday as

House lawmakers heard sponsor testimony on the House's companion bill to SB 1, House Bill 12, sponsored by Rep. **Don Jones** and **Dave Dobos**.

Meanwhile, subcommittee hearings continue on House Bill 33, the biennial budget bill, with future hearing dates available for public testimony are scheduled for March 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 22, and 23. Contact Will if you are interested in testifying.

Finally, the Backpack Bill – House Bill 11 – is set to receive sponsor testimony in the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 4:00 p.m.

Merrin unveils dueling income tax cut proposal, schools not impacted

In yet another stunt to assert his alleged control over the House Republican Caucus, Rep. **Derek Merrin** held a press conference with 14 fellow Republicans outlining their priority legislation. Key among them was establishing a 2.5% flat income tax rate – a greater cut than the 2.75% proposed by Speaker **Jason Stephens'** faction. Others included support for the Backpack Bill, the Save Womens Sports Act, and House Joint Resolution 1, which increases the vote threshold needed to approve a state constitutional amendment from the current 50% to 60%.

A notable difference between the Stephens and Merrin tax cut proposals was how to fund them: Stephens would raid the \$1.2 billion property tax rollback funds for schools and local governments, and Merrin would rely on the state's \$3.5 billion Rainy Day Fund and the projected \$6 billion excess cash reserves that will remain at the end of this fiscal year.

Heard around the Statehouse

"Can we go to 2.75% in one year? Yeah, I think we can, but we're going to have to look at the places where we're spending money and say we're not going to do that anymore. I'm enthusiastic about what the House is doing no matter which version it is and look forward to hopefully getting that so the Senate has plenty of time to review the budget." - Senate President **Matt Huffman**, referring to House Bill 1 and a dueling income tax proposal offered by Rep. **Derek Merrin**.

"Ohioans have given the state government a massive surplus, ok? The state right now is flushed with cash. And we should have a savings account, we should be responsible. We should always have extra money on hand. We do have the money." - Rep. **Derek Merrin**, referring to his faction's ability to pay for his tax cut proposal with excess cash reserves and funds from the Rainy Day Fund.