

Legislative/System Improvements Committee

Zoom Meeting Summary Friday, February 24, 2023 10:00 a.m.

In attendance on video conference: Tony Podojil, legislative consultant William Schwartz and member representatives from 35 school districts.

Tony Podojil convened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. The primary focus of the meeting was to update Alliance members regarding the most recent legislative activity listed below.

I. Recently Introduced Bills:

1. SB 49 (Reynolds) - Requires each kindergarten through 12 public school to adopt a policy providing students with religious accommodations (Religious Expression Days "R.E.D." Act)

- Requires each public school to adopt a policy that reasonably accommodates the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of students, which includes three excused absences for religious expression days.
- Requires each public school to adopt a policy permitting teachers and staff to take up to three days of religious expression leave per school year.
- Entitles the bill the "Religious Expression Days" or "R.E.D." Act.
- Bill was amended in the first hearing to remove the mandated 3 leave days for school employees.

2. HB 1 (Mathews) - Revisions to property taxation and income tax rates

- Consolidates the state income tax brackets into one single flat income tax rate of 2.75%.
- Eliminates the 10% property tax rollback, a credit the state pays on property owners' behalf to schools and local governments, currently valued at \$1.2 billion statewide.
- Revises the 2.5% owner-occupied property tax rollback to be a flat \$125 credit.
- Modifies the homestead exemption program to increase amount and apply it to legacy homeowners.
- Reduces the property tax assessment rate from 35% to 31.5% (a 10% decrease) and requires it to be adjusted downward based on market factors.

Tony and William, this week, met with key policy staff in House Speaker Jason Stephens' office to discuss House Bill 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. A subset of the larger group will reconvene late next week to discuss a potential coalition strategy on responding to the bill.

Tony and William 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. The second hearing for proponent testimony will take place March 7.

3. HB 6 (Powell) - Require schools, colleges, and universities to designate separate single-sex teams and sports for each sex (Save Women Sports Act)

- Requires the designation of separate athletic teams for participants of the female sex and male sex.
- Explicitly prohibits male participants from participating on teams or in competitions designated only for participants of the female sex.
- Does not include previous versions' provisions regarding gender exams.
- Applies the bill's provisions to K-12 and higher education.

4. HB 8 (Swearingen/Carruthers) Requires public schools to adopt a policy on parental notification on student health and well-being and instructional materials with sexually explicit content (Parent's Bill of Rights)

- Prohibits school personnel from encouraging a student to withhold from a parent information concerning the student's health or well-being, unless that disclosure would result in abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
- Establishes a process under which the district or school must resolve written concerns submitted by parents about topics addressed in the bill.
- Requires a notice to parents about sexually explicit instructional materials, an opportunity to review them, and an opportunity to request alternative instruction.
- Requires a notice to parents about school-provided healthcare services and requires districts to create a healthcare plan for students.
- Requires a notice to parents about changes to the health services that provide a safe learning environment; and
- Titles the bill the Parents' Bill of Rights.

5. HB 10 (Callender/Sweeney) Expresses the intent to continue phasing-in the FSFP and, if practicable, fully phase it in

- Contains placeholder language to continue the phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan.

6. HB 11 (McClain/John) Creates the Backpack Scholarship Program (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.
- Qualifies for a Backpack voucher every Ohio student, including existing non-voucher students already attending chartered nonpublic (private) schools and incoming kindergartners.
- Provides a state-paid voucher of \$5,500 or \$7,500 for private school tuition or for specified "educational goods and services" at non-chartered non-public schools and for homeschoolers.
- Reduces frequency of state test administration for grades 1-8 by requiring testing every other year on a school-selected test that is a nationally recognized measure of achievement; applies current high school testing and graduation requirements; and
- LSC estimates it will cost the state \$1.13 billion immediately and annually thereafter to pay for existing non-voucher private school students, homeschool students, and non-chartered non-public school students.

7. HB 12 (Jones/Dobos) Reform function, responsibilities, accountability of state education office to emphasize education, workforce development

- The House companion bill to Senate Bill 1.

8. HB 33 (Edwards) Main Operating Budget (Budget Bill)

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

9. HB 38 (Blackshear/Miranda) Allows school districts to permit students to take up to three mental health days away from school each school year.

Creates a permissive tool for schools to allow students to take up to three mental health days each school year.

10. HB 47 (Brown/Bird) Requires the placement of AEDs in public and private schools.

Requires, rather than permits under current law, the placement of AEDs in each building and requires an emergency action plan for their use.

II. Legislative Updates

1. Budget Bill – Overview, timeline, and testimony

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.

2. House member assignments

Contact Will if you need clarification on your House member(s) as a result of redistricting.

3. Senate member assignments

Contact Will if you need clarification on your House member(s) as a result of redistricting.

III. ODE/STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1. Literacy

We have been working on a policy draft proposal with several stakeholder groups addressing a comprehensive approach to K-3 literacy. That proposal will be forwarded to the Executive Committee and then members for their review and discussion following the March 22 Executive Committee meeting.

2. State Superintendent search

The State Board indefinitely suspended the search in light of the legislature’s pursuit of Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 12.

IV. NEXT STEPS

1. Regional meetings, lawmaker assignments and outreach

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.