



Week of April 22, 2024

Senate activity

The Senate passed [House Bill \(HB\) 250](#) by a vote of 32-0. Prior to passage, the Senate Education Committee amended the bill to require public schools adopt a smartphone policy that (1) emphasizes that student cellular telephone use be as limited as possible during school hours, (2) reduces cellular telephone-related distractions in classroom settings, and (3) if approved by the board of education, permits students to use cellular telephones or other technological devices for student learning or to monitor or address a health concern. This requirement does not apply to private schools.

The committee also amended the bill to revise the two ESC transportation pilot programs for the ESC of Central Ohio and the Montgomery County ESC. Among other changes, it requires those ESCs to “identify students who are struggling with transportation issues” rather than identifying districts to participate in the program.

HB 250 returns to the House for a final concurrence vote, which could occur at the House’s next session on May 8.

House activity

The House of Representatives passed [HB 230](#) by a vote of 79-13. The bill requires public schools to provide age-appropriate, research-based instruction on the dangers of fentanyl to students in grades kindergarten through twelve that includes instruction in prescribed areas of focus. The bill does not apply to private schools.

The House also passed [HB 70](#) by a vote of 92-1. The bill requires public and private schools to adopt a policy regarding the administration of over-the-counter drugs to students.

Joint property tax committee hears testimony from school officials

A panel of school district treasurers and superintendents, including Alliance members Mayfield City Schools and Sycamore Community City Schools, testified this week before the Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform. Their testimony featured a discussion of the state and local elements of school funding, the 20-mill floor, cash balances, five-year forecasts, levy cycles, the shifting local tax base, and the growth of economic development tools. Preceding their testimony was Mike Sobul, a former treasurer from Alliance member Granville Exempted Village Schools who also worked at the Department of Taxation.

Senate committee amends Parents Bill of Rights

While not voting on the bill, the committee also adopted a substitute version of [HB 8](#). The bill, titled as the Parents Bill of Rights, was modified with the following changes:

- requires districts to adopt a procedure to obtain authorization from parents prior to providing any type of health care service to the student, including physical, mental, and behavioral health care services. *The bill explicitly states that this requirement does not apply to “emergency situations.”*
- prior to providing a health care service to a student, requires districts to notify parents whether the service is required to be provided by the school district under state law and if other options for a student to access the service exist. *The bill explicitly states that this requirement does not apply to “emergency situations.”*

- requires the policy to specify the manner in which a student's parent will be notified of any change in the student's health care, counseling, or well-being services;
- removes the requirement that a student who requests to be excused from instruction that includes sexuality content be permitted to take an alternative class;
- specifies that the bill's changes do not "prescribe all rights of parents or preempt or foreclose claims or remedies in support of parental rights that are available under the constitution, statutes, or common law of this state."
- prohibits districts from providing instruction that includes sexuality content to students in grades kindergarten through three;
- requires districts to make its policy publicly available and post it prominently on its website;
- requires the policy required by the bill to be adopted within 120 days of the bill's effective date.

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

The committee held sponsor testimony on the following bills:

- [HB 407](#), which prescribes transparency and accountability procedures for private schools that enroll students with state-paid vouchers; and
- [HB 445](#), which requires, rather than permits, school districts to adopt a policy that allows students to be excused from school to attend a released time course in religious instruction.

The committee also heard opponent testimony on [SB 168](#), which creates various deregulation and flexibility measures, from the Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, and the Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Finally, the committee also heard proponent testimony from various organizations and individuals on [HB 432](#), which enacts licensure flexibility for career-technical educators.

The committee will not meet again until May 7.

House Higher Education Committee

The committee held sponsor testimony on [HB 219](#), a companion bill to [SB 104](#), which recently passed the Senate. HB 219 makes modifications to the College Credit Plus program. The House bill includes provisions that were stripped from the Senate bill that require cost-sharing for textbook fees between colleges and universities and school districts when a student uses a textbook that is not an open-source, or free, material.

Heard around the Statehouse

"Incumbent bloodbath." - **Barrett Young**, executive director of Make Liberty Win, [referring to the results of his organization's \\$2 million in campaign spending](#) on 15 primary challenger candidates that led to the ouster of four incumbent House Republicans in the March primary election, as well as several wins in open races.

"I'd say the state's relationship is not good with the OHSAA." - Rep. **Jay Edwards**, [speaking on a radio show](#) about his frustration with the Ohio High School Athletics Association (OHSAA).

"While they're raising ticket prices and adding playoff games, they're sitting on \$9 million... OHSAA is turning into a business. It's no longer about the players, it's no longer about the coaches and the communities. They're worrying about how to make money....Every move the OHSAA makes is about money." - **Edwards**, again speaking on OHSAA.

