



## Week of May 6, 2024

### **School smartphone policy bill headed to DeWine**

A required policy governing student smartphone use in public schools is on its way to Gov. Mike DeWine for his signature. During a raucous session in which anti-Stephens House lawmakers unsuccessfully attempted to offer a motion to vacate House Speaker **Jason Stephens**, the House on Wednesday unanimously concurred in the Senate amendments to [House Bill \(HB\) 250](#), clearing the final legislative hurdle.

The bill also (1) specifies that license holders who renew their license can have a license under the former three-grade-band system or the current two-grade band system, provided the new license includes at least one of the grades they were previously authorized to teach, (2) ensures teachers who teach outside their current licensure grade band by up to two grade levels – a recent flexibility from [HB 33](#) – are considered to be “properly certified or licensed” teachers, (3) specifies that the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), and not the State Board of Education, will be responsible for adopting standards and curriculum to incorporate capitalism into the financial literacy standards, as recently enacted by [Senate Bill \(SB\) 17](#), and (4) modifies the ESC transportation pilot programs.

The House did not place [HB 183](#) (same-sex bathrooms) and [HB 344](#) (replacement levies) on the voting agenda. The next meeting of the House is May 22.

### **Senate sends property tax exemption bill to House for final vote**

The Senate passed [HB 50](#) by a 29-1 vote. The bill, which now returns to the House for a final concurrence vote, (1) requires property owners to submit an application for the state residential property tax exemption for approval to the county auditor, rather than rather the state Tax Commissioner, (2) prohibits school districts from challenging whether a residential development property is eligible for the property tax exemption, and (3) removes the notification requirement for school boards to be notified of an applied-for exemption.

The Senate, which does not meet again until May 22, also unanimously passed [SB 179](#), which creates the Hilliard Davidson Wildcats license plate.

Though no votes occurred, the Senate Education Committee met to hear the following bills:

- proponent testimony on [SB 219](#), which would restore the current two grade bands back to the previous three grade bands;
- all testimony on [SB 208](#), which would require districts to include in their open enrollment policies an exception for military children;
- all testimony on [HB 147](#), which would modify teacher licensure revocation provisions, teacher hiring practices, and classifications of conduct unbecoming to the teaching profession; and
- sponsor testimony on [SB 128](#), which would require disclosure of the for-profit status of community school operators and post-secondary educational institutions on various promotional materials and contracts for employment.

### **New chair of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee**

Rep. **Gayle Manning** is the new chair of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee after last week’s ouster of Rep. **Adam Bird** as the head of the committee and as a committee member. Bird

and five other House Republicans were removed last week from their committees by House Speaker **Jason Stephens** due to their financial support of candidates who challenged incumbent House Republicans in the March primary election. Rep. **Beth Lear** will replace Bird on the committee.

The committee will not meet on May 14 and will return on May 21.

#### **Other committee activity**

The following bills received hearings in the legislature:

- sponsor testimony in the Senate for [SB 244](#), which creates “Residential Stability Zones” where partial property tax exemptions may be granted but schools and local governments are not reimbursed for the lost revenue;
- sponsor testimony in the House for [HB 499](#), which extends, from 15 to 30 years, the potential term of a community reinvestment area (CRA) property tax exemption for residential development projects located near a megaproject, provided the impacted school board approves the extension; and
- sponsor testimony in the Senate for [HB 139](#), which increases the penalty for assaulting a sports official.

#### **School-funding expert testifies to joint property tax committee**

Economist and school-funding expert Dr. Howard Fleeter testified on Wednesday to the Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform. Fleeter was joined by the Ohio Farm Bureau, a county commissioner, and Ohio citizens, among others.

The committee will meet for the final time on May 22.

#### **DEW holds public meeting, focusing on pending transportation rules**

The Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) met Thursday for its required public meeting [to discuss pending transportation rules and to provide an update](#) on the state’s fine arts standards. The rules are open for public comment, which closes on May 17. The rules – many of which contain policy changes stemming from the Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group – are accessible here:

<https://education.ohio.gov/About/Ohio-Administrative-Code-OAC-Rule-Comments>.

*Alliance members are encouraged to review and provide feedback on the pending rules.*

#### **Heard around the Statehouse**

“I just thought that it sent the right message to the rest of the caucus. The House keeps moving forward. We have 14 committees meeting this week, we have 12 bills on the floor tomorrow, and we’re going to keep doing the people’s work and we look forward to doing good stuff.” - House Speaker **Jason Stephens** referring to last week’s ouster of six House Republicans from their posts as committee chairs and from their committee.

“It’s a significant issue. The question at the moment is why. Some of it has to do with refunds. Is the economy slowing down?” - Senate President **Matt Huffman** [reacting to state revenues missing the projected estimates for several times](#).