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Week of February 3, 2025

DeWine unveils final budget proposal

Gov. **Mike DeWine** on Monday revealed the initial details of his executive budget proposal, his last as Ohio governor. The budget rollout was accompanied by budget testimony from agency directors **Kim Murnieks** (OBM) and **Steve Dackin** (DEW), who were questioned by members of both parties on the proposal's use of fiscal year 2022 base cost input data and the phase-out of the guarantee, among others. The budget proposal, referred to as the "Blue Book," is accessible here: https://obm.ohio.gov/state-budgets/01-operating-budget/01-Fiscal_Years_2026-2027.

The bill text of the budget will be released on Monday, February 10 and will be accompanied by the "Red Books," which are detailed analyses of the proposal for each state agency. District-by-district funding simulations from LSC and OBM will not be published until next week at the earliest, at which point members will receive copies of those printouts.

While the full details of the proposal are not yet known due to the forthcoming publishing of the bill text, the items below are known features of the governor's proposal:

- full implementation the Cupp-Patterson formula (83.33% in FY26 and 100% in FY27);

- maintaining the base cost input data year at the 2022 level;
- reducing three of the formula's four guarantees to 95% in FY26 and 90% in FY27;
- requiring districts with low literacy rates to utilize state aid to support literacy instruction;
- requiring districts to adopt the Department's cell phone model policy, which effectively bans cell phones during instructional time;
- creating a school principal apprenticeship program, supported by \$10 million over the biennium for this initiative, which will include coursework in the foundations of school leadership and a full year of on-the-job training as an apprentice;
- requiring high schools to incorporate career planning into students' existing graduation plans;
- eliminating middle-school waivers from career-technical education requirements, beginning in the 2026-27 school year;
- providing \$7 million in each fiscal year to support career planning and workforce readiness through partnerships with local organizations to ensure students have access to career coaching, mentoring, and career pathways;
- implementing the recommendations of the School Bus Safety Task Force;
- providing \$30 million to support a School Bus Safety Grant Program to fund safety enhancements to Ohio's school bus fleet and \$4 million for more robust driver training;
- increasing the annual school bus driver training requirement from four hours to six hours and providing access to advanced bus driver training opportunities;
- creating the Driver Training in Schools Grant Program, that allows schools to create their own student driver training programs or partner with independent driver training academies;
- creating the OhioSEE Program, a new vision services program supported by \$50 million over the biennium that ensures that roughly 33,000 students who fail vision screenings in kindergarten through third grade receive comprehensive eye exams;
- continuing the Governor's Merit Scholarship, which provides the top 5% of each high

school graduating class with a \$5,000 scholarship to attend an Ohio college or university and ensures those students are guaranteed enrollment to the main campus of any Ohio public college or university;

- leveraging state funding for reduced-price meals to ensure all low-income students have access to school breakfasts and lunches;

- maintaining spending on all five voucher programs without adjusting eligibility, income levels, or other adjustments; and

- increasing per-pupil funding from \$1,000 to \$1,500 for community school facilities and qualifying independent STEM schools for supplemental funding currently provided to community schools.

Heard around the Statehouse

"It is time that schools that continue to lose students, that we are not funding empty desks. That we will not be funding phantom students." - Gov. **Mike DeWine**, referring to his proposal to phase out the guarantee.

"I think the (school funding) system needs to be taken apart. We need to keep the parts that are successful, are teaching kids, and not simply placing money where kids aren't...A lot of schools are going to get more money than they got before – substantially more." - House Speaker **Matt Huffman**.

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