

March 10, 2017

## OEA President Testifies on State's Draft ESSA Plan

On Thursday, March 9, 2017, OEA President Becky Higgins testified before the legislature's Joint Education Oversight Committee on the state's draft plan to respond to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). President Higgins's testimony focused on OEA's call to improve the draft plan in the areas of testing, school report cards, teacher evaluations and school improvement. The full testimony can be found [here](#).

ESSA is the federal law that replaced No Child Left Behind and requires states to develop plans that address academic standards, assessments, school accountability and assistance for struggling schools. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) spent months gathering public input from over 15,000 Ohioans before releasing its draft plan. Educators, parents, students and community members sent a clear message that they believe that too much time and attention is given to standardized testing. Unfortunately, the state's plan is not responsive to these concerns.

The state's draft plan was released in early February and was open for public comment through March 6, 2017. Amid calls to delay of the submission of the plan until September, ODE has stated its intent to proceed with an April submission.

## OEA Testifies on K-12 Portion of Budget Bill

OEA Vice President Scott DiMauro testified on House Bill 49, the state budget bill for Fiscal Years 2018-2019, before the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary & Secondary Education on Wednesday, March 8. The testimony focused on a number of changes to education policy that are of interest to OEA. These issues include:

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- A funding formula that falls short of providing the resources needed for a high-quality public education to all students
- Charter school funding
- Requiring business externships for teachers as a part of license renewal
- Changes to the College Credit Plus
- Changes to Career Technical Educator Licenses
- Requiring superintendents to appoint three non-voting, advisory members from the local business community

You can read more about these proposals and OEA's positions in the testimony [here](#) that was given before the subcommittee.

## OEA Opposes Bill Aimed at Voucher Expansion

Senate Bill 85, sponsored by Senator Matt Huffman (R- Lima), was introduced on Thursday, March 2, 2017. The bill would replace the EdChoice and Cleveland voucher programs with a new statewide voucher called the "Opportunity Scholarship." OEA is opposed to this bill.

SB 85 calls for a greatly-expanded voucher program based on family income. The bill would double the threshold for eligibility of the current program to 400% of poverty, expand the program to all grades, and remove the cap on the number of vouchers. The bill would increase voucher amounts and allow the money to be used for tuition and fees. Any unused portion of the voucher would be deposited into an education savings account for the student.

OEA is opposed to the creation or expansion of voucher programs as they drain needed resources from the approximately 90% of students who attend Ohio's local public schools. These policies serve to reduce educational opportunities of the vast majority of students in the name of "choice." Further, a recent study of Ohio's EdChoice program found that students who received the voucher fared worse academically than their closely matched peers in public schools.

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In addition to Senator Huffman, four Senators have signed on as co-sponsors of SB 85. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Education Committee and has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

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