

February 16, 2018

## Legislation Introduced to Consolidate Education Departments

On Wednesday, February 14, 2018, House Bill 512 was introduced. The bill, sponsored by Representative Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin), seeks to consolidate the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation into a new, cabinet-level agency, the Ohio Department of Learning and Achievement.

The bill would make no changes to the composition of the State Board of Education. However, most of its functions and policy-making powers would be transferred to the new Department. Under the bill, the State Board would oversee teacher licensure and educator misconduct.

House Bill 512 has seven co-sponsors. The stated goal of the legislation is to align Ohio's education and workforce development departments so the state can more efficiently respond to a changing job market. At a press conference announcing the proposal, Speaker of the House Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville) expressed his support for the bill.

OEA's view: "While OEA agrees with the lawmakers who've offered this proposal about the importance of preparing our children for a successful future in the workplace," said OEA President Becky Higgins, "we question whether some elements of this proposal are the best way to achieve that goal. In particular, OEA is concerned about the diminished role of the State Board of Education. Members of the Board serve an important function as public officials to whom parents and educators can go to affect K-12 education issues. As this plan makes its way through the legislative process, OEA looks forward to working with lawmakers on the issue."

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