

June 21, 2019

SENATE PASSES BUDGET BILL

Earlier this week, the Senate Finance Committee amended House Bill 166, the state budget bill for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. The Senate version of the bill removes the OEA-supported language that repeals the failed state takeover law, restores local control and teacher collective bargaining rights, and holds all school districts accountable for locally developed school improvement teams and student-centered improvement plans in F-rated school buildings. Additionally, the Senate version of the bill included new high school graduation requirements that do not meet the needs of Ohio students.

On Thursday, the bill passed the Ohio Senate with a vote of 33-0. Prior to passage, Senator Teresa Fedor (D- Toledo) offered two OEA-supported amendments to remove the Senate expansion of EdChoice vouchers and to remove changes to educator licensure. Both amendments were tabled by a vote of 21-12.

HB 166 will now head to a conference committee to address the differences between the House- and Senate-passed versions. The House and Senate conference committee members are: Senators Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls), Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and Sean O'Brien (D-Cortland) and Representatives Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton), Jim Butler (R-Dayton) and Jack Cera (D-Bellaire).

The General Assembly must pass the completed budget by the end of June. Below is a brief summary of some of the changes the Senate made to the bill in different education policy areas.

Academic Distress Commissions: OEA is urging the HB 166 Conference Committee to adopt the House-passed Academic Distress Commission (ADC) language that was removed by the Senate. An alternate ADC plan being pushed by some in the Senate, and opposed by OEA, was not included in the bill. The House-passed ADC language is the same as language in HB 154, a stand-alone bill that passed in the House by 83-12 earlier this year. The House-passed ADC language would repeal the disastrous state takeover law, restore local control to elected school boards, return teacher collective bargaining rights, and hold school districts accountable by requiring school

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improvement teams and plans in F-rated school buildings. This will be OEA's top priority in conference committee.

Graduation: The Senate-passed bill includes new long-term graduation requirements based on a plan put forward by Ohio Excels (a group representing business interests). This is an item of difference for conference committee as the House-passed budget did not include changes to graduation requirements.

Under the proposal, the new requirements would begin with the class of 2023. A student would need to achieve a competency score on two end-of-course exams (Algebra and ELA II) and earn two "graduation seals" in addition to earning requisite course credits in order to graduate. Two tests (Geometry and ELA I) would be eliminated. If after two attempts a student did not score high enough on the tests, a student may use an alternative demonstration of competency that is limited to 1) college-level course completion through College Credit Plus; 2) a career technical education pathway; or 3) enlisting in the military. These are not viable options for all students.

OEA opposes this plan as currently written as has an overly rigid reliance on high-stakes testing. Students should be able to demonstrate what they know in ways other than a standardized test. OEA will be advocating for improvements to this language or that the issue to be considered in separate legislation.

Licensure: Eliminates the requirement that teachers providing instruction in core subject areas be "properly certified or licensed" to teach in the subject areas and grade levels in which they provide instruction. Also, eliminates the requirement that paraprofessionals employed by a program supported with federal Title I funds be "properly certified" in order to provide academic support in core subject areas. A Senate floor amendment was offered to remove these provisions from the budget bill, but the amendment was not accepted. Under continuing law, teachers and paraprofessionals must have a license, permit, or certification to provide instruction, but under the bill they would not be required to be "properly certified" in any specific subject areas or grade levels.

For the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, allows an individual who holds a valid educator license in any of grades 7 through 12 to teach a computer science course if, prior to teaching the course, the individual completes a professional development

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program approved by the district superintendent or school principal that provides content knowledge specific to the course the individual will teach.

Report Cards: Modifies the grading scale used to determine letter grades assigned for the report card's value-added progress dimension, which computes "gain index" values based on the number of standard errors above or below the mean on a statistical measure of academic growth. This may result in higher value-added progress grades for some districts.

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