



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media contacts at the end of release

Education management groups urge lawmakers to address key budget issues

Columbus — Three statewide education management organizations urge the legislative conference committee to adopt key education issues in the biennial budget bill, Amended Substitute House Bill (HB)166.

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) delivered a letter to the House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford), Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) and members of the conference committee, detailing significant issues that need to be addressed through the conference committee process in which the two chambers work out their differences.

The letter included support for additional funding proposed by the House for Student Wellness and Success Funding, money aimed at removing noneducational barriers for students living in poverty. The House-passed version of HB 166 had increased funding by \$125 million over the original proposal from Gov. Mike DeWine. However, the Senate eliminated the increase in its version of the bill. The organizations are pushing for restoring the increase.

In outlining the groups' other priorities, OSBA Chief Executive Officer Rick Lewis explained the organizations' concerns with the Senate's decision to remove provisions that would have eliminated Ohio's academic distress commission laws, which the groups describe as a state takeover of local control.

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“(The House-passed) provisions provide a pathway for local districts and communities to determine the needs of their districts and develop an improvement plan that will meet the needs of students,” Lewis said. “The steps contained in the House version of the bill would go a long way toward improving outcomes for schools and, most importantly, for the students they serve.”

BASA Executive Director Kirk Hamilton spoke to concerns about the new graduation requirements proposed for the first time through the budget bill.

“What we supported most about that (State Board of Education-recommended) plan was its expansion of opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do,” Hamilton said. “The provisions included in the bill still rely heavily on tests and only provide additional paths to graduation once test options have been utilized.”

Another concern in the Senate-passed version is the significant expansion of Ohio’s school voucher program, which pays tuition for private education with public tax dollars. OASBO Executive Director Jim Rowan said, “Ohio already provides millions of taxpayer dollars to private schools. While Ohio struggles to adequately fund local school districts, we urge you not to add additional programs that will siphon dollars from public education by diverting public tax dollars to pay for private school tuition.”

The organizations urged conferees to adopt the House version on these three critical issues as well as a provision addressing problems with the school district earned income tax statutes. However, the groups prefer the Senate version for such things as the new school breakfast requirements, funding for growing school districts and the removal of three tax-related bills the House had proposed in its version.

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