

Legislative Update for OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED

April 12, 2024

DeWine announces education proposals at State of the State address

Gov. Mike DeWine on Wednesday addressed Ohioans at his 2024 State of the State address. Joined by his cabinet and members of the House and Senate and their guests, DeWine devoted the first hour of his more-than-70-minute speech on education and children's issues. While details are not yet available, DeWine announced the following policy proposals on higher education issues:

- Urge every college and university president in Ohio, including provosts and deans of the colleges of education, to immediately align their teacher training programs to the Science of Reading.
- Collaborate with our colleges and universities to collect data on how many of those who graduate from college or a university have a job in six months and whether that job is related to their degree.
- Provide Ohio's quality-rated early childhood education programs access to curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading.

General Assembly activity

The House Higher Education and Workforce Committee on Wednesday passed House Bill (HB) 183 on party-line, 10-5 vote. HB 183 requires public and private schools and colleges and universities to designate multi-occupancy restrooms or locker rooms for the exclusive use by biological boys or by biological girls. The bill now heads to the Rules and Reference Committee where House Speaker Jason Stephens will decide whether to place the bill on the agenda for a vote of the full House, which could occur as soon as April 24.

Senate Bill (SB) 168 received proponent testimony on Tuesday in the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee from statewide superintendent, principal treasurer, and school board organizations. The Buckeye Association of School Administrators, the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, Alliance for High Quality Education, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, and the Ohio School Boards Association testified in support of the bill. Members of the committee, including House Democrats, expressed concerns about the bill's lowering the educational attainment level of some licenses and allowing the hiring of unlicensed teachers who have a master's degree and pass a specified subject area exam. The witnesses responded that removal of those provisions would be acceptable.

Opponent testimony on SB 168, as well as testimony on other bills, is expected to take place on Tuesday, April 23.

The committee also held sponsor testimony on HB 432, which permits an individual to apply for an initial career-technical workforce development educator license instead of only permitting an employing school district to apply on the applicant's behalf; permits an individual with an employment offer to enroll in one of two alternative educator preparation programs in lieu of a career-technical workforce development educator preparation program offered by a higher education institution; and requires the State Board of Education to issue an advanced career-technical educator license to licensed educators who complete four years of teaching under the existing two-year technical educator license.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Don Jones, received mostly favorable feedback from committee members, with one House Democrat expressing concern about whether those benefiting from the bill will be well qualified. A second hearing could take place on April 23.

State Board of Education activity

The State Board of Education held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, meeting for the last time at the office of the Department of Education and Workforce. The newly modified licensing board will now meet at the William Green Building in downtown Columbus.

Among other actions, the board held public testimony, which featured discussion from representatives from Ohio's colleges and universities who requested a reversal of the legislature's recent licensure grade band changes from preK-5, 4-9 and 7-12 to preK-8 and 6-12. The panel also discussed a potential licensure fee hike amid a multi-million-dollar budget shortfall. Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft told board members he "could not feel more positive" than he currently does about the prospect of securing a state appropriation from the legislature to help fill the budget hole. Craft recently met with House Speaker Jason Stephens, Senate President Matt Huffman, and Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio on that issue. Craft also told members that, should a state appropriation not materialize, a licensure fee hike of only \$25 to \$50 would be expected.