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OHIO ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Arts Online Newsletter Week of October 9, 2023

135th OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY



House Democratic leaders to hold “People First” Townhall Meetings

Democrats in the Ohio House of Representatives have **scheduled two free town hall meetings in Central Ohio to discuss ongoing efforts to ensure that “...all Ohioans have the freedom to be who they are, the dignity of a safe community and secure job, and the opportunity to thrive.”**

The Clintonville “People First” Town Hall Meeting will be held on Monday, October 11, 2023, at 6:00 PM at the Whetstone Recreation Center, 3923 N. High Street. House Minority Leader Allison Russo will be joined by state Senator Bill DeMora and state Representative Beth Liston. Also invited will be state Representatives Ismail Mohamed and Munira Abdullahi. The meeting will provide an **opportunity to update the community about legislation and listen to constituents.**

Another town hall meeting will be held at the Grandview Heights Public Library, 1685 W. 1st Ave., on Monday, October 16, 2023, at 6:00 PM, again hosted by House Minority Leader Allison Russo will be joined by state Senator Bill DeMora.

The “People First” Town Hall series is **being held statewide with Democratic lawmakers.** Visit [HERE](#) to register for the event.

Contact other House Democratic Representatives **to learn more about town hall meetings being held in other districts.** [HERE.](#)

Senator Jerry Cirino to host symposium on higher education

Senator Jerry Cirino, chair of the Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, announced on September 25, 2023, that he will host a symposium about higher education governance at the Statehouse Atrium on October 23, 2023 from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM. The symposium will be co-hosted by Senate President Matt Huffman. **The current members of the Boards of Trustees of Ohio’s 14 public universities have been invited to attend.**

According to a press release from Senator Cirino, “This symposium, which I believe is the first ever of its kind in Ohio, will be a great **opportunity for the trustees of our critical institutions of higher education to spend time with the Senate and to hear from respected speakers.**”

While the **speakers for the symposium have not been announced**, according to the news release the symposium will feature nationally recognized speakers to discuss higher education policy, future strategies, and current challenges. **The following topics will be included:**

- The Legislature's Role in Higher Education
- Board of Governance in Higher Education
- Guide to Selecting a College President
- Compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court Admissions Decision
- Strategic Direction for Higher Education
- Securing Intellectual Diversity
- Higher Ed and Changing Workforce Demands

The symposium will be streamed on the Ohio Channel.

Source: The Ohio Senate News (September 25, 2023). "**Senator Jerry Cirino to Host Public University Trustee Symposium**," [HERE](#).

Education-related bills recently introduced in the Ohio House or Senate

HB290 Thriving Families Tax Credit (Casey Weinstein and Lauren McNally) To authorize the refundable thriving families tax credit for certain income taxpayers with dependents who are minor children.

SB168 Education Regulation Law Changes (Michele Reynolds) With regard to **education regulation reform**; to amend the versions of sections 3301.0714 and 3314.03 that are scheduled to take effect January 1, 2025; to continue the changes on and after that effective date. Introduced on October 3, 2023.

Hearings Held Last Week

The House Finance Committee

The House Finance Committee, chaired by **Representative Jay Edwards**, met on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 and received proponent testimony from 13 witnesses on **HB164 Foster-to-College Scholarship Program** (Dontavius Jarrells and Bill Seitz). The bill establishes the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program; requires the Department of Education to hire a full-time school foster care liaison; and makes an appropriation. HB164 was reported out of the House Higher Education Committee with unanimous support on June 13, 2023.

HB164 would provide **qualifying children in Ohio's foster care system with the means to pay for college by covering the necessary costs after other grants and scholarships have been utilized**. The bill is the result of discussions with higher education stakeholders and is estimated to cost \$7.5 million a year. Currently 35 other states have similar scholarship programs.

The bill would apply to children in foster care 13 years of age and older. The scholarship could be applied to trade schools, community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education. In addition, the bill creates foster care liaisons who would support children in the foster care system who qualify for the program.

Kim Eckhart, Research Manager with the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio, testified in support of the bill. She told the committee that Ohio trails other states in outcomes for teens who were in foster care: fewer foster care alumni graduate from high school or become gainfully employed, and many of these teens become involved in the justice system.

However, according to her testimony about similar scholarship programs in Texas and Connecticut, the future of foster care alumni changes when they know that there is support for them, and the proposed Foster-to-College Scholarship Program will motivate teens in foster care to "stay in school and keep up their grades."

Caidyn Bearfield, an Ohio State University student and advocate for children in foster care, also testified in support of the scholarship program. She was in foster care as a teenager and told the committee that the proposed Foster-to-College Scholarship would have been an "enormous game changer" in her life.

She also made it clear that it is unreasonable to assume that the state's college scholarship programs can adequately serve foster care alumni. State scholarships are awarded to students based on grades and need, but often don't cover the basic needs of students, such food, clothing, and housing.

Based on her own experiences in Ohio's foster care system, she was years behind in her education because of the lack of consistent access to school and the trauma that she endured, and she lacked the resources to meet her basic needs, so she had to work to survive after being aged-out of foster care.

She told the committee that the educational disadvantages that foster teens endure "...occur during a time when we are processing trauma and when our brains are still developing. For these reasons, competitive scholarships and grants that require high GPAs and participation in extracurricular activities are out of reach for us."

She closed her testimony by saying, "**Please, invest in our futures and give us a fighting chance at independence without more interim trauma. I think that you will be amazed the good things we are capable of when our circumstances allow us to thrive.**"

In response to some questions from committee members about expanding current scholarship programs to support foster care alumni rather than creating a new program, Representative Jarrells, one of the co-sponsors of HB164, emphasized what Caidyn said in her testimony about the importance of ensuring that the basic needs of foster care alumni are met, in addition to providing tuition, room and board to attend college. He said that he wants the committee to understand that "...none of us, many of us, have not been in Caidyn's position, and to say that we can do something else when what we are advocating for is for Caidyn and folks who are like Caidyn to have supports and security so that they can be their best self is something that we all as a committee have to understand."

Written proponent testimony was also submitted by representatives from Cleveland State University, University of Cincinnati, Miami University, and Kent State University, and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio.

Source: **House Finance Committee, Meeting** on October 4, 2023, [HERE](#).

Source: **Ohio Channel, House Finance Committee, Hearing** on October 4, 2023, [HERE](#).

The House Pensions Committee

The House Pensions Committee, chaired by Representative Adam Mathews, met on October 3, 2023 to consider HB78 **STRB Elections, Membership** (Bill Seitz and Joseph Miller) Regarding State Teacher Retirement Board elections and membership requirements.

The State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) of Ohio serves active, inactive and retired Ohio public educators. STRS is the fifth largest public teacher pension system in the U.S. and is governed by an 11-member STRS Board that includes elected and appointed members, and members who are active and members who are retired. There are 528,000 teachers and retirees in STRS.

HB78 as amended on June 13, 2023, would permit re-employed retirees of STRS to serve on the STRS Board as a retired teacher. Current statute prohibits these retirees from serving on the STRS Board in any capacity.

The committee amended the bill to correct an oversight in HB33, the FY24-25 Operating Budget (Jay Edwards), regarding the pre-service teacher permit. The amendment specifies that employees who earn the newly created pre-service teacher permit would be members of the State Teachers Retirement System and pay into that retirement system. **The committee then reported the bill favorably.**

Source: House Pensions Committee, Hearing on October 3, 2023 [HERE](#).

Source: Ohio Channel, House Pensions Committee Hearing on October 3, 2023 [HERE](#).

Source: Bischoff, Laura, A. (September 20, 2023) "Ohio's teacher pension fund wants to boost how much districts pay into the system," Columbus Dispatch [HERE](#)

House Higher Education Committee

House Higher Education Committee, chaired by Representative Tom Young, met on October 4, 2023 and considered sponsor testimony on HB183 Single Sex Bathrooms (Beth Lear and Adam Bird).

HB183 requires students in primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education to use a bathroom that corresponds with their biological sex at birth. The bill also prohibits public and chartered nonpublic schools and educational service centers from permitting members of the female biological sex to share overnight accommodations with members of the male biological sex. As noted by Chairman Young, the bill does not require that students carry around with them their birth certificates, but some committee members wondered how students would affirm their biological sex without showing their birth certificate.

According to the testimony of Representative Adam Bird, school administrators asked him to introduce this bill to clarify that transgender students must use a bathroom and locker room that aligns to their biological sex at birth or use a single occupant bathroom, because school leaders are getting mixed messages from attorneys about allowing transgender students to use a bathroom aligned to their gender identity, raising concerns among parents and students. According to his testimony, "House Bill 183 will eliminate difficult situations for school leaders and will create consistent policies across the state."

Representative Lear included in her testimony examples of lawsuits and incidents that have been brought to her attention by school officials and parents concerning bathroom and locker room use.

Several committee members raised questions about the safety of transgender students who would be forced to use bathrooms aligned to their biological sex rather than their gender identity. Representatives Abdullahi, Jarrells, and others on the committee were concerned about the percentage of transgender students who are assaulted in these situations.

Representative Bird responded by saying that in many schools students have permission to use the bathroom in the nurse's office or a single occupant bathroom. But when asked by Representative Liston if the bill requires that all schools have single occupant bathrooms or if the bill includes funds to build single occupant bathrooms, Representative Bird said "no".

Source: **House Higher Education Committee, Meeting** on October 4, 2023 [HERE](#).

Source: **Ohio Channel, House Higher Education Committee Meeting** on October 4, 2023 [HERE](#).

This Week at the Statehouse

The Ohio House and Senate have scheduled sessions on Wednesday, October 11, 2023. The Senate will meet at 1:30 PM and the House will meet at 2:00 PM.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023

The Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Andy Brenner, will meet on October 10, 2023 at 3:00 PM in the South Hearing Room.

The committee will **receive sponsor testimony** on SB162 Academic Intervention Services (Andy Brenner) and SB168 Education Law Changes (Michele Reynolds).

SB162 requires school districts, community schools, and STEM schools to provide evidence-based academic intervention services, free of cost, to students who demonstrate a limited level of skill in state assessments in math or English language arts.

Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, and each school year thereafter, the bill requires the Department of Education and Workforce to randomly select 5 percent of districts and schools for a review of their academic intervention services.

AB168 addresses changes to Sections 3301.0714 and 3314.03 Ohio Revised Code that are scheduled to take effect January 1, 2025.

Source: Senate Education Committee, Hearing on October 10, 2023 [HERE](#).

Source: Ohio Channel Senate Education Committee, Hearing on October 10, 2023 [HERE](#).

The House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, chaired by Representative Adam Bird, will meet on October 10, 2023 at 4:00 PM in Hearing Room 116. The committee will **receive testimony on the following bills**:

- **HB250 Military Enlistment Diploma Seal** (Jessica Miranda and Tracy Richardson) To revise the Military Enlistment diploma seal. Introduced August 1, 2023.
- **HB214 School Policy on Staff Speech** (Adam Holmes) To require each school district, charter school and STEM school to adopt a policy setting forth expectations and standards for all professional staff members related to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals or principles concerning political movements, ideology or social action.
- **HB206 Expulsions for Endangering Health, Safety of other Students** (Gary Click and Marilyn Robb Blasdel) With respect to the expulsion of a student from a public school for actions that endanger the health and safety of other students or school employees.

Source: **House Primary and Secondary Education Committee** on October 10, 2023 [HERE](#).

Source: **Ohio Channel** October 10, 2023 [HERE](#).

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2023

The House Higher Education Committee, Chaired by Representative Tom Young, will meet on October 11, 2023 at 9:30 AM in Hearing Room 017. The committee will receive testimony on the following bills:

- **SB83 Higher Education Operations Enhancement** (Jerry Cirino) To enact the Ohio Higher Education Enhancement regarding the operation of state institutions of higher education and to revise the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act. The committee will consider a substitute bill.
- **HB183 Single-Sex Bathrooms** (Beth Lear and Adam Bird) Regarding single-sex bathroom access in primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

Source: **House Higher Education Committee, Meeting** on October 11, 2023, [HERE](#).

Source: **Ohio Channel, House Higher Education Committee** on October 11, 2023 [HERE](#).

The House Finance Committee, chaired by Representative Jay Edwards, will meet on Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 10:00 AM in Hearing Room 313. The committee will **receive testimony on HB164 Foster-to-College Scholarship Program** (Dontavious Jarrells and Bill Seitz). The bill establishes the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program and requires the Department of Education (ODE) to hire a full-time school foster care liaison, and makes an appropriation.

Source: House Finance Committee, Meeting on October 11, 2023, [HERE](#).

Source: Ohio Channel, House Finance Committee, Hearing on October 11, 2023, [HERE](#).