



Most of House's K-12 finance plan adopted

In the final days of June, the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives reached agreement on the state biennial budget bill (H.B. 110), meeting the June 30 deadline for passage by both chambers.

According to *Gongwer News Service*, a new system for funding primary and secondary education in Ohio crafted over the last three years has been enshrined in the state's operating budget.

The conference committee agreed to return to the K-12 funding plan crafted by the House after the Senate excised it in favor of its funding formula. The upper chamber voted 32-1 to adopt the panel's report, and the House followed suit with a vote of 82-13.

The House plan, which was developed in part by Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and former Democratic Representative John Patterson, establishes new individualized base costs per pupil for each of the state's school districts and determines every district's capacity for generating revenue locally based on property and income wealth factors within a community.

Gongwer also reported that along with restoring HB 1 "almost entirely" to the budget, Representative Scot Oelslager (R-Canton) said the conference report also:

- Specifies that the plan only applies to the next two school years;
- Maintains direct funding for private school vouchers and charter schools;
- Restores the House's direct funding model for open enrollment;
- Puts Student Wellness and Success funding inside the formula "with guardrails on the eligible uses that are similar to current law;"
- Allocates \$50 million to the School Bus Purchase Fund;
- Sets funding for charter and STEM school facilities at \$500 per pupil; and,
- Excises the school funding oversight commissions and cost studies proposed in the House-passed budget.

Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima), who previously raised concerns that the costs of the House funding plan could balloon over its proposed six-year phase-in, said the language limiting the formula to two years is intended to ensure lawmakers don't tie the hands of their successors.

"The outyear costs are still a significant concern, No. 1," he said. "Two, no matter what we do about predictability, all spending decisions under our constitution are two-year decisions."

The inclusion of most of the House K-12 funding plan in the budget bill earned praise from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate.

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