



Legislative Update for OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED

Feb. 16, 2024

SB 168 receives sponsor testimony in House committee

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers pushed back on various licensure provisions contained in Senate Bill 168 during a hearing this week in the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. A recording of that hearing can be accessed here: <https://ohiochannel.org/video/ohio-house-primary-and-secondary-education-committee-2-13-2024>.

Speaking to committee members, Sen. Michele Reynolds (R-Canal Winchester) defended her proposal that would, among other changes, allow districts to hire unlicensed individuals to teach if they have a master's degree and pass a subject area examination in the area in which they intend to teach. The bill also would reduce the required educational attainment level from a master's degree to a bachelor's degree for holders of a senior professional educator license, lead professional educator license, professional administrator license, and alternative superintendent license. A full summary of the legislation is available here:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=21981&format=pdf>.

Both Republicans and Democrats expressed concerns with various provisions of the bill, including the bill's licensure changes. Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport), a former high school teacher, asked Reynolds, "Because I have master's degree, do you think I would qualify to be an attorney?" Reynolds said no.

"This is an attempt to try to help a profession where people are leaving because they feel for whatever reason – they're feeling, whether it's disrespected, not supported – whatever the reason, this is deregulation to try to help the cause, not hurt it," Reynolds told the committee.

Jones also offered a change to the bill's provision on the hiring of unlicensed teachers that would require classroom experience. "Why don't we start putting on some type of stipulation that you've got to spend some time in the classroom?" asked Jones. "Would

you entertain something like that rather than maybe dumbing down the requirements but maybe setting some minimum standards as far as years of experience?”

Reynolds responded to Jones that she was open to discussing that idea.

“I came here six years ago because I was tired of people who had a concern about education making decisions that had never been in the classroom. And I think that’s part of our problem we have,” Jones added.

Meanwhile, Democratic lawmakers Reps. Beryl Piccolantonio (D-Gahanna) and Joe Miller (D-Amherst) also expressed concern about the bill’s licensure provisions and collective bargaining changes during their questioning.

Piccolantonio expressed worry about hiring individuals without any training or experience working with students, which could be allowed under the bill. Reynolds responded that she hosted interested parties and meetings about that topic and acknowledged that there are arguments on both sides. Reynolds also emphasized the bill’s goal of increasing the workforce and decreasing teacher shortages, concluding that that she is hearing the concerns about those issues but she’s not receiving solutions.

A second hearing for proponent testimony on the bill could occur on April 9, and a third hearing featuring interested party testimony and opponent testimony could occur on April 23.

State Board meets amid budget shortage and planned relocation

Teacher licensure fees may be raised by 50% if the legislature does not provide additional funding to the State Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft told members of the State Board of Education this week. A potential fee increase from \$200 to \$325 or \$350, for example, is in response to a multi-million-dollar budget deficit the panel now faces after most of its duties and other state funding were transferred to the newly created Department of Education and Workforce as a result of changes in the state budget bill. In response, Craft and the board are requesting \$10 million from the legislature to cover the shortfall.

Sen. Andrew Brenner, an ex officio member of the board, had previously assured the panel in September that the legislature would help provide some stopgap funding. This week, however, he appeared to backtrack somewhat on fully funding the difference. “They may need some supplemental funding,” Brenner told a reporter. “It could be several million dollars, but I don’t believe it’s \$10 million.”

The board will also relocate its offices and meeting space to the William Green Building located a few blocks from its current location at the Department of Education and Workforce. That move is expected to take place in April, with meetings occurring on the 12th floor.

Finally, the panel discussed proposed rules for the newly created Pre-service Teacher Permit that was created in the state budget bill. The cost of the permit is proposed to be \$25, and RAPBACK enrollment costs will be \$5, according to staff with the State Board. Board members also discussed potential modifications to the Resident Educator program as a means to reduce costs incurred by the board, but those efforts would require legislative changes, which is outside their purview. It is highly unlikely that the modifications that were discussed will be implemented by the General Assembly.

DEW continues implementation of Science of Reading laws

The Department of Education and Workforce this week released a bulletin outlining the timeline for the release of approved core instructional materials and intervention materials aligned to the Science of Reading. Information is accessible here: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/OHED/bulletins/38a7d23>. Below are key dates in the rollout of the materials.

- January 31: The initial list ([linked here](#)) of approved core instructional materials was posted.
- February 9: The list of core instructional materials ([linked here](#)) that are currently under review was posted.
- March 1: The approved materials for the second phase will be posted. A two-week appeals process for unapproved vendors will begin at this point.
- Sometime in April: The approved intervention materials for prekindergarten through grade 12 will be posted.

No action on same-sex bathroom bill until April

A planned committee vote and potential House vote on a bill that would require same-sex bathrooms in K-12 schools and colleges and universities was abruptly canceled last week and will not be brought up for consideration again until April 10 at the soonest. House Bill 183 was marked for a committee vote in the House Higher Education Committee on Feb. 7 and was expected to be placed on the House agenda that same day for a vote of the full chamber, but Chairman Rep. Tom Young (R-Washington Township) canceled the meeting without reason.