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Rep. Bill Reineke Introduces Legislation Aligning Ohio's Education System with Workforce Needs

House Bill makes state more accountable in preparing students for demands of 21st century economy

COLUMBUS—During a press conference at the Ohio Statehouse, State Representative Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) unveiled legislation aimed at better aligning Ohio's public education system with the state's workforce needs, as well as making the state more accountable for achieving results.

Reineke's proposal would create a new cabinet level agency called the Ohio Department of Learning and Achievement (DLA), which will consist of the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. This structural change is not expected to have a direct impact on local school boards or school districts.

"Education is one of the states' most important tasks and this legislation aligns our education systems to better prepare our workforce for the needs of today and tomorrow," Reineke said. "I look forward to discussing this bill further with the education and workforce community with the goal of working together to ensure that Ohio's students are ready and prepared for the future."

By forming a unified, cohesive department to oversee all education and workforce development policy, Ohio will be more fluid and flexible in preparing the state's 1.7 million students to succeed both educationally and professionally, as well as to meet the workforce needs of the rapidly changing 21st century economy.

The changes contained in the legislation closely resemble similar reforms made in 2007 to the state's higher education model, in which oversight of state-supported colleges and universities transitioned from a nine-member Board of Regents to the Chancellor of the University System of Ohio.

Several education and workforce development leaders from Seneca and Sandusky counties joined Rep. Reineke, as well as a number of other House lawmakers supportive of the proposal.

Gary Barber, Superintendent of Tiffin City Schools, emphasized how the legislation can lead to long-term success by helping students prioritize both education and career readiness.

"This will help set a higher bar for career preparation programs, enabling all students to earn meaningful postsecondary degrees or credentials," Barber said. "This will continue to challenge our K-12 systems to be simultaneously focused on curriculum and our students' aspirational career goals."

"I can clearly and confidently tell you that I support the principles and spirit of this new workforce and education restructuring bill, and the intent to create a Department of Learning and Achievement, which brings together K-12 education policy, the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation," said David Zak, President and CEO of Seneca Industrial & Economic Development Corp. "It brings together two of the most important producers of talent—K-12, higher education, and the largest user of talent—growing private sector businesses represented by the Office of Workforce Transformation."

Greg Edinger, Superintendent of Vanguard-Sentinel Career & Technology Centers, expressed support for the proposal and explained how it can prepare Ohio's workforce for the demands of tomorrow.

"There can be great value in multiple agencies working under one umbrella with the goal of developing policy to align the education systems," Edinger said. "This focus on workforce and career preparedness at an early age aligns with the goals of our district and is essential for moving forward and addressing the critical workforce demands our state is seeing."

Jim Lahoski, Superintendent and CEO of the North Central Ohio Educational Service Center, said the bill will "enhance opportunities for all students to be prepared for success."

"The bill further aligns to the Ohio State Board of Education's vision for all Ohio pre-K-12 students to graduate with the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to successfully continue their education and/or be workforce-ready and successfully participate in the global economy as productive citizens," Lahoski said.

Under the legislation, which Reineke introduced today, the director of the DLA will be appointed by the governor with consent of the Senate. The director will have the authority to appoint deputy directors where deemed appropriate for purposes of streamlining pre-K-12 through workforce policy development and implementation.

The legislation makes no membership changes to the State Board of Education, but brings its duties more in line with other state boards and commissions and keeps its functions consistent with the state constitution. That includes primarily quasi-judicial responsibilities, such as regulating teacher licensure and educator misconduct. The State Board also will continue to appoint a State Superintendent.

Furthermore, the State Board of Education, State Superintendent and Ohio Department of Education staff will maintain the authority to:

- Revoke a district and/or school charter
- Issue educator licenses
- Establish payments in lieu of transportation determinations
- Make territory transfer determinations
- Supervise and administer Ch. 119 administrative proceedings regarding community schools and sponsors
- Determine the permanent exclusion of students
- Sponsor community schools in accordance with state law
- Oversee the state schools for the deaf and blind
- Administer other miscellaneous Ch. 119 administrative law proceedings

Having just been introduced, the bill will soon receive a number and be assigned to a House standing committee for further review.

Full footage of today's press conference is available here: <http://ohiochannel.org/video/press-conference-education-bill-announcement>



OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Majority Communications Department

Aligning Ohio's Public Education System with 21st Century Workforce Needs

Creates the Ohio Department of Learning and Achievement (DLA)

- A new cabinet level agency comprised of the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

Forms a unified structure to oversee education and workforce development policy

- Under a new streamlined system, Ohio will be more fluid and flexible in helping teachers prepare the state's 1.7 million students to succeed both educationally and professionally, as well as meet the workforce needs of the rapidly changing 21st century economy

Increases accountability and responsiveness to education and workforce needs

- The Director of the DLA, appointed by the governor with consent of the Ohio Senate, will be directly responsible to the governor as a member of the cabinet

Resembles similar reforms made a decade ago to Ohio's higher education model

- Those reforms transitioned oversight of state-supported colleges and universities from the nine-member Board of Regents to the Chancellor of the University System of Ohio

Keeps the role of the State Board of Education consistent with the state constitution

- It makes no changes to the membership of the State Board of Education, but instead brings its duties more in line with other state boards and commissions, including quasi-judicial responsibilities such as regulating teacher licensure and educator misconduct

Creates clear lines of authority and a common mission to education policy

- The bill is designed to improve oversight and service-delivery in Ohio's pre-K through college and workforce readiness system

Does not impact operations at the local level

- This bill makes structural changes at the state level and does not interfere or directly impact the policy or authority of local school boards or individual schools, classrooms and campuses

State Education Governance Reform *Key Points*

Education is probably the most important issue state government works on, yet it is managed in the most dysfunctional way. Partnering with locally elected school boards to prepare Ohio students for the future is probably state government's most important job. Yet, of all its duties, Ohio manages this responsibility in the most dysfunctional way: via a part-time board of elected politicians and appointed members who earn around \$5,000 a year for a two-day meeting once a month. These members together hire and manage a superintendent who runs the Department of Education. In simpler times this loose, hands-off, distributed oversight model may have worked, but the complexity, size (1.7 million students), cost of education (\$23 billion per year) and changing economy demand a modern management structure with clear accountability to ensure better outcomes.

Unclear roles lead to confusion, duplication, inaction and poor results. Despite the General Assembly's authority to set education policy, the State School Board frequently revisits, questions and seeks to revise the laws it passes. This not only produces confusion for educators on the frontlines in our local schools, it has historically distracted the Department of Education from its actual purpose – implementing Ohio's education laws. Continued frustration with funding issues, poor-performing schools, controversies over education alternatives and constant complaints over testing have plagued Ohio for years. Could better progress have been made in resolving these difficulties if Ohio had a more modern, accountable and clearly defined management structure for education?

A modern management structure for state education duties, aligned with higher education and workforce efforts, will better serve students. The policy implementation work of the Department of Education should be transferred from oversight by the part-time Board to full-time, professionals accountable to the governor. They would work side-by-side with Ohio's experts on higher education and workforce development in a single Cabinet agency (the new Department of Learning and Achievement). This would give students and workers the benefit of a single, dedicated team working to advance their interests beginning in preschool and progressing through elementary school, high school, college and on to workforce training—all with the goal of preparing them for success.

Freeing up the Board to oversee the education profession will improve quality. The Ohio Constitution creates a State School Board that hires a superintendent and gives the General Assembly the authority to prescribe their duties. By refocusing the State School Board, superintendent and Department of Education on the regulation and licensing of educators, Ohio will see new, valuable support given to the teaching profession.

Predictable opposition will come from those only looking out for themselves: Some education special interests, have already voiced opposition to the bill, worrying that their individual clout will somehow be diminished by the coordination the new structure would provide. While it is predictable for some to defend the status quo and only look out for their own, narrow interests, does anyone really think those issues are more important than advancing the needs of students and workers and strengthening the Ohio?

Bottom Line: One of the state's most important duties demands a modern, accountable management system, not a centuries-old, dysfunctional approach. Aligning higher education, workforce development and pre-K-12 efforts, will provide Ohio students and job creators the benefits of a single, dedicated team working together on their behalf toward the same goal – preparing students for the future. Providing this team with a clear hierarchy and making them accountable to the state's executive, will help ensure that students, parents and educators receive the high performance they need and deserve.



Media statement on proposed education governance changes

COLUMBUS (OH) – Today, Representative Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) announced that he'll be introducing legislation to significantly change the way Ohio governs public schools. The proposal calls for the creation of the Ohio Department of Learning and Achievement, which will focus on aligning Ohio's education system to better prepare the workforce of tomorrow. The new agency will absorb the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation and most of the responsibilities of both the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Higher Education. The leader of the Department of Learning and Achievement would be a cabinet-level official and appointed by the governor.

"While the most important part of education happens every day in classrooms across Ohio, state leaders bear the responsibility of providing support and clear guidance to assist school districts in implementing education law," said Chad L. Aldis, vice president for Ohio policy and advocacy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. "By creating an agency under the direct oversight of the governor, the legislature would ensure that governors are unambiguously responsible—and accountable to the people—for executing Ohio education laws."

The soon to be introduced legislation shifts the focus of the state board of education away from its current role, which is to create administrative rules and implement laws passed by the legislature, and to a narrower scope focused primarily on educator licensure. Their role would be similar to the various state licensing boards that focus on professional standards.

"The introduction of this legislation well before the general election shows that the House is serious about holding the governor accountable for educational progress, whoever he or she may be," Aldis added. "As gubernatorial candidates talk about their visions for education, these changes would ensure that our next governor will truly have the ability to shape the direction of education and should result in more coherent policies and greater continuity."

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is the nation's leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio.

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