

## **Disturbing Stuff -The Hits Just Keep on Coming**

**Tom Moscovic – Legislative Chair**

### **Your Tax Dollars leaving Your School District**

**Supporters of education overhaul make case in Ohio Senate committee.**

**Expansion of school vouchers also introduced.**

Workforce development components of a bill to overhaul education in Ohio by taking power from the state school board and putting it under the governor's officer were applauded by supporters in an Ohio Senate committee Tuesday.

Supporters ranged from businesses to career centers to the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, all of whom spoke out at the Senate Education Committee about the progress they believe the bill could make in developing workforce talent in the state, rather than bringing in employees from other states and countries.

Jamie Nash, superintendent of the Buckeye Hills Career Center, which services Gallia, Jackson, and Vinton counties, said the career technical institutions have already expanded as educational centers for the state, and an overhaul in favor of workforce development could further that.

"We are proven and for years have been the best kept secret," Nash said. "However, it's time for Career Technical Education to have a seat at Ohio's highest table of leadership."

Senate Bill 1 would restructure the education department and bring more focus to college alternatives, starting with renaming the department the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. A focus on workforce development is supported by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

"We want to see an education system in this state that is better aligned with the needs of Ohio's employers," said former state Rep. Rick Carfagna, now senior vice president of government affairs for the chamber.

Senate Bill 1's sponsor, state Sen. Bill Reineke, R-Tiffin, said though the education overhaul bill fell short of the votes needed for passage in the last General Assembly, the bill and its aims are still needed in the state.

"The bill's focus is still the same: to improve academic and workforce skills to drive better accountability and outcomes for our kids' education and career readiness," Reineke said at the previous committee hearing introducing the bill.

The State Board of Education hasn't moved on the hiring process for a new superintendent of public instruction — citing the legislature being poised to overhaul its role — and the superintendent position is headed for a change under the new bill. The head of the department would become a director, housed within the governor's cabinet.

The board of education's role would change under the bill as well, with topics such as teacher licensure and professional conduct still under the purview of the board, but other administrative duties absorbed by the cabinet-level director position.

Changes that have been made since the previous version of the bill died last year specifically address criticism of homeschooling regulations made as the bill was fast-tracked through education committees in December.

Reineke said SB 1 would "guarantee homeschooling families the ability to home-educate their child by exempting a child from compulsory school attendance when that child is receiving instruction in core subject areas from their parents."

This comes amid a new investigation by the department of education into what's been reported as a pro-Nazi homeschooling network run by a couple from Upper Sandusky.

Voucher expansion bill

Education funding could also see some changes if a new school voucher expansion also introduced in Tuesday's Senate committee hearing is approved.

The expansion of private school subsidies, introduced as Senate Bill 11, is supported by organizations and private school advocates who say they are looking for a way for more students to be eligible to attend private schools in “underperforming” public schools in the same district.

Students are already eligible for vouchers in low-performing districts, but Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has proposed expanding voucher income eligibility from 250% to 400%. Senate Republicans are looking to go further by opening vouchers to all students and increasing the amount of money received by thousands.

State Sen. Sandra O’Brien, R-Ashtabula, has said her bill would give \$5,500 for grades K through 8 and \$7,500 for high school students. Homeschoolers would also receive an expanded tax credit, from \$250 to \$2,000 per year, according to O’Brien, which can be used for “educational expenses such as books, supplies, software, subscriptions, and other materials that are used directly for home instruction.”

On Tuesday, she said the bill would “give universal eligibility to all students in the state” to private school vouchers, and can be used at public, community, and chartered non-public schools.

It wouldn’t replace the Autism Scholarship or the Jon Peterson Special Needs programs, O’Brien said. “All families, regardless of income, should have the power to choose schools for their children that wealthy families have,” O’Brien said.

During the committee hearing, state Sen. Louis Blessing expressed concern that a sudden influx of students would increase the cost of private school education, but O’Brien said she doesn’t anticipate a rush to the scholarships.

O’Brien said take-up rates “are never close to 100%,” and that it would be reasonable to expect more like a 50% take-up rate.

Public school advocates have criticized the measure as a thinly veiled attempt to take money away from public schools and feed it to private, sometimes religious, schools. After DeWine brought up a voucher expansion as part of his “state of the state” address, unveiling his budget priorities for the year, public education supporters said the increase in subsidy funding would create undue competition for education dollars.

But O’Brien pushed back on that idea, saying “competition makes everyone better.”

“Our goal is to have our students get an excellent education even if it means attending a different school,” O’Brien told the Senate Education Committee. “Let’s put free markets to work to provide the best quality product and service in the most cost-effective way.”

## **Homeschool Oversight????????? Tax Dollars Again**

**Ohio education leaders, lawmakers denounce online neo-Nazi homeschool channel.**

**The channel is used on the app “Telegram.”**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Does there need to be more oversight of homeschooling in Ohio?

That’s the question tonight after published reports of an online neo-Nazi homeschool surfaced over the weekend.

Everyone 10TV spoke to about this Monday, from the governor’s office to the Ohio Department of Education, has condemned the curriculum this homeschool claims to use.

Some have said it is vile, outrageous, and deeply upsetting. All agree there is no place for this type of hate.

Telegram is the messaging app used for what is called the “Dissident-Homeschool Channel.” It has more than 2,600 subscribers.

Posts are published by users who go by Mr. and Mrs. Saxon. People by those names have been interviewed on an anti-Semitic podcast.

In one episode the couple says they were, “having a rough time finding Nazi-approved school material” for their home-schooled children.

We have not been able to independently confirm that the couple is here in Ohio, as both the Huffington Post and Vice have reported.

We can confirm there is content on the channel regarding Ohio’s proposed laws for homeschooling.

The Department of Education confirmed Monday morning it is aware of the articles about this. In Ohio law, ODE does not review or approve home school curriculum.

Now there's a call to action from those who say that needs to change.

“We need to really take a review on what's going on in our public policy and take this very seriously,” said Ohio Board of Education Member Teresa Fedor. “I'm calling on the governor the day before he's giving his State of the State speech. Well, this is the state of the state that he needs to realize Ohio is in. And if you don't say something against this, then your silence is sanctioning this activity.”

In a statement to 10TV, the press secretary for Governor Mike DeWine wrote, “Racism and Antisemitism are vile and repugnant. Governor DeWine condemns them in all their forms.”

Dr. Stephanie K. Siddens, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction, provided the following statement: “I am outraged and saddened. There is absolutely no place for hate-filled, divisive and hurtful instruction in Ohio’s schools, including our state’s home-schooling community. I emphatically and categorically denounce the racist, antisemitic and fascist ideology and materials being circulated as reported in recent media stories.

Each day, educators, school leaders and family members work to make Ohio’s school communities, including our home-school settings, places where students are encouraged, motivated and inspired through positive, inclusive and caring behavior.”

Senate Democrats in Ohio have denounced the online homeschool and are calling for stronger oversight of home schooling.

We also reached out to Senate Republicans today about this and are waiting on a response. ODE said it is actively reviewing compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.