

A Bunch of Important Relevant Legislative Stuff

By Tom Moscovic

March 2019

Ohio Charter Schools Want More Tax Dollars

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Charter schools in Ohio have long wanted more money from the state, but a history of well-publicized scandals, mismanagement and poor report card grades have made it hard to justify giving them any more tax dollars.

Have they cleaned up their act enough now?

Four years after the state legislature passed a charter school reform act, forcing the closure of some weak schools, and a year after the state shut down the giant Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow after a funding and attendance fight, a few charters are renewing their request.

Some charter officials are pressing the state for another \$2,000 per student a year for most charter schools in the upcoming state budget.

Leading the charge are the Breakthrough Schools, the Cleveland based chain that has the strongest results out of all charters in Ohio. Joining them are the growing Accel Schools chain, which has grown to 40 schools in the state over the last three years.

Also joining in are KIPP, the United Schools and Grand Schools in Columbus, and Dayton Early College Academy.

They say that charters - public schools that are open to any student, but which are privately-run - are at a disadvantage to school districts. Charter schools rely mainly on state tax dollars to operate, leaving them with far less than districts who also seek local property tax levies from voters to add on top.

Also joining the fray is the Fordham Institute, a right leaning education advocacy group that supports charters and school choice. Fordham estimated in a January study that charter schools statewide have about \$2,000 less per student than districts.

In urban areas, where most charters are located, that gap rises to more than \$4,000 – \$10,556 for charters and \$14,648 for districts.

In Cleveland in particular, charters here have almost \$6,000 less – \$10,554 compared to \$16,500 for the district, Fordham estimated.

“Sadly, due in part to polarizing politics, Ohio has long under-resourced its public charter schools, shortchanging hundreds of thousands of needy students in the process and leaving them with uneven opportunities,” wrote Fordham researcher Aaron Churchill.

John Zitzner, one of Breakthrough’s founders, says that the funding gap forces him to fundraise and seek donations from philanthropic groups just to operate as it does. That’s not sustainable, he says, and has set himself a 2020 deadline to “fix” funding in the state.

He says that families should not be penalized by having less to cover their child’s education, just because they choose a charter.

“This whole thing is totally unfair,” Zitzner said.

But supporters of school districts, who often view themselves as competing with charters for students and dollars, scoff at that argument. The whole original justification for charter schools, they note, was that privately-run schools would get better results at less cost. **(Every dollar that goes to a Charter School is money taken from the Public School District)**

The state also has a reputation nationally of having too few controls over charters and allowing profiteering managers to fill their pockets by offering low-quality schools. A few years ago, a national charter official referred to Ohio as the “Wild, Wild West” of the charter school world.

And four years ago, Stanford researchers found that Ohio’s charters performed far worse than traditional public schools, showing less academic growth than similar students in districts.

“Once we clean up all the problems with charter school accountability, then we can talk about money,” Fleeter said.

Gov. Mike DeWine Wants an 18-cent gas Tax Increase

The state and local governments are facing a \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion yearly deficit in road and bridge construction, beginning July 1. Gov. Mike DeWine wants a gas tax increase to fill the gap. COLUMBUS, Ohio – Gov. Mike DeWine said he will ask the legislature to raise the gas tax by 18 cents a gallon to bring in new revenue for road and bridge construction.

If passed by the Ohio General Assembly, Ohioans would pay 46 cents a gallon at the pump in state gas taxes, since the current state gas tax is 28 cents a gallon. The federal gas tax is 18.4 cents.

“We’re taking that to the legislature,” DeWine said. “Ultimately, it’s going to be up to the legislature.”

Ohio Department of Transportation Director Jack Marchbanks is expected to unveil specifics of the ODOT budget Thursday morning before the Ohio House Finance Committee. If passed, it would be Ohio’s first gas tax increase since 2005.

Marchbanks has previously said that \$67 million is raised a year from a penny a gallon increase. An 18-cent increase could bring Ohio \$1.2 billion. But it’s unclear whether DeWine wants to increase taxes at once or incrementally -- as did former Gov. Bob Taft, who raised the gas tax two-cents a year for three consecutive years, beginning in 2003. Marchbanks has told lawmakers part of the reason Ohio has fallen behind in road funding is because unlike in many other states – including neighbors Indiana and Michigan -- gas taxes don’t automatically rise with inflation. DeWine didn’t say anything about indexing the gas tax to inflation, an idea that was floated by a committee he appointed to look into the issue.

Lake County School Districts Ranked – State Report Card

District▲	Grade	Performance index	Standards met
Fairport Harbor Exempted Village	D	76.461	2 of 24
Kirtland Local	B	100.557	19 of 24
Madison Local	C	85.646	5 of 26
Mentor Exempted Village	B	95.771	11 of 24
Painesville City Local	F	65.283	1 of 24
Perry Local	B	94.115	9 of 24
Riverside Local	C	92.865	8 of 24
Wickliffe City	D	86.803	5 of 26
Willoughby-Eastlake City	C	86.743	3 of 24

Local News

State defends school takeover law in Ohio Supreme Court case

COLUMBUS (AP) — Lawmakers didn't violate the Ohio Constitution or a procedural rule when they passed a law that shifted control of poor-performing school districts, the state argued in a new filing at the Ohio Supreme Court, which is considering a case challenging the law .

The measure puts operational control of such districts in the hands of unelected CEOs hired by state-appointed academic distress commissions, instead of their locally elected school boards. The version of the bill that contained those changes was pushed through the Legislature in one day in 2015 in a flurry that upset teachers unions and public school supporters.

The school board in Youngstown, the first troubled district affected by the legislation, and school employees' unions argue the so-called Youngstown Plan violates the constitution by stripping school boards' authority. They also say lawmakers rushed the changes into legislation about improving schools that was already under consideration, skirting more thorough debate and the "Three Reading Rule"

requiring repeated consideration of legislation on different days if a measure has been significantly changed.

In a filing Monday, the state and its Department of Education argued those claims aren't true and that the law should stand.

They said the bill had the same purpose — improving education in failing school districts — throughout the course of the legislative process, was given appropriate consideration, and didn't remove all powers of the affected school boards.

They also urged the state's high court to overrule precedent from a previous case and declare that courts can't review whether a bill complies with the "Three Reading Rule" beyond checking whether legislative journals indicate the House and Senate each considered a measure on three separate days.

"This division of authority is a matter of respect between coordinate branches: just as the legislature must not intrude on the judicial power by supervising the writing of judicial opinions, the courts should not intrude on the legislative power by supervising the writing of the laws," they wrote.

An appeals court previously sided with the state.

Groups representing Ohio school boards, superintendents, teachers and school business officials had joined the Youngstown board in urging the court to consider the case, as did school boards in Lorain and East Cleveland, two other districts affected by the law.

ACTION-Support Voting Rights Advancement Act

The Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019 (H.R. 4) would once again require states and localities with recent histories of voter discrimination to seek approval from the U.S. Department of Justice before making any changes in their election laws. The measure is a direct response to the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby v. Holder*, which invalidated key provisions of the Voting Rights Act. First passed in 1965, the Voting Rights Act addressed persistent and purposeful discrimination - through literacy tests, poll taxes, intimidation, threats, and violence - that curtailed political participation for millions of American citizens. As voter suppression efforts evolve, the need for protections persists. In the 2016 elections, the first in decades without the protection of the Voting Rights Act, 33 states implemented laws that could lead to voter suppression. Make contact and tell your representatives to support the Voting Rights Advancement Act.

How to Reach Your Elected Officials (Current January 2019 – January 2021)

U.S. Congress

Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown (D)

1301 East Ninth St., Suite 1710, Cleveland, Ohio 44114

216.522.7272

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202.224.2315

Email: www.brown.senate.gov/contact

Ohio Senator Rob Portman (R)

312 Walnut St., Suite 3075, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

513.684.3265, Cleveland 216.522.7095

Washington, D.C. location

448 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

202.224.3353

Email: www.portman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact-form

Facebook: www.facebook.com/senrobportman

Ohio Representative David Joyce (R)

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Ohio State Senator John Eklund (R)

District 18—Portage, Southern Geauga, northwestern Geauga, part of Lake—Kirtland, Willoughby Hills, Mentor, Perry, Madison
Senate Building, 1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215
614.644.7718
Email: <http://ohiosenate.gov/eklund/contact> or www.senate.state.oh.us/eklund/contact
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Second 4 yr. term expires at the end of 2020, ineligible to run for third term.

Ohio State Senator Kenny Yuko (D)

District 25---Richmond Hts., Euclid, Willowick, Wickliffe, Willoughby, Eastlake, Timberlake, Grand River, Painesville, part of Cuyahoga
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Ohio State Representative John Rogers (D)

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Ohio State Representative Jamie Callender (R)

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