This March 11, 2020, Legislative e-Update is provided by OESCA to Ohio’s ESCs, their client school districts, and other key education stakeholders. The e-Update provides information on the education bills of interest to Ohio’s public education community introduced during the 133rd General Assembly. Only bills that have been acted on in the last 60 days are included in this edition. Bills are organized in order of last action date with the 3 most recent activities listed in descending order. There are also links to the state bill page for users to download any bills, analyses or fiscal notes. The document concludes with the latest news from Capitol Square.

### Legislative Tracking Report

The following education bill of interest are monitored by OESCA on behalf of the membership and client districts. Bills are organized according to last action date:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sponsor(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Recent Status</th>
<th>State Bill Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB521</td>
<td>LOAN FORGIVENESS INFORMATION AVAILABILITY</td>
<td>Sweeney B</td>
<td>To require the Chancellor of Higher Education and public service organizations to disseminate information regarding the federal public service loan forgiveness programs.</td>
<td>3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Higher Education</td>
<td>2/20/2020 - Introduced</td>
<td><a href="https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-521">https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-521</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB520</td>
<td>LOAN FORGIVENESS - PUBLIC EMPLOYEES</td>
<td>Sweeney B</td>
<td>To establish a pilot program to assist public service employees in applying for the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and to make an appropriation.</td>
<td>3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance</td>
<td>2/20/2020 - Introduced</td>
<td><a href="https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-520">https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-520</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB532</td>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION</td>
<td>Brinkman T, Kelly B</td>
<td>To require the State Board of Education to adopt standards for mental health education, to permit school districts to include mental health education in their curriculum, and to make an appropriation.</td>
<td>3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recent Status: 3/3/2020 - Introduced
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-HB-532

HB527  SAVE WOMEN'S SPORTS ACT (POWELL J, STOLTZFUS R) To enact the "Save Women's Sports Act" to require schools, state institutions of higher education, and private colleges to designate separate single-sex teams and sports for each sex.
Current Status: 3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education
Recent Status: 2/26/2020 - Introduced
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-HB-527

SB288  STUDENT RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION (GAVARONE T) Regarding student religious expression in interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities.
Current Status: 3/4/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
Recent Status: 2/26/2020 - Introduced
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-SB-288

SB126  CRISIS ASSESSMENTS-SUICIDAL YOUTH (MANNING N) To authorize a mental health professional to provide a crisis assessment, without parental consent, to a minor who is or is believed to be suicidal and to make an appropriation to support the employment of social workers or mental or behavioral health professionals at educational service centers.
Current Status: 3/4/2020 - Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid, (Fourth Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/19/2020 - Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid, (Third Hearing)
1/22/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid, (Second Hearing)
Position: Undetermined
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-SB-126

SB268  CAPITAL APPROPRIATION (SYKES V) To modify the purpose of a capital appropriation.
Current Status: 2/25/2020 - Senate Finance, (First Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/5/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance
2/3/2020 - Introduced
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-SB-268

HB523  STEM DEGREE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM (PATTERSON J, CARFAGNA R) to establish the STEM Degree Loan Repayment Program, to authorize a refundable tax credit for employers who make payments on student loans obtained by a graduate to earn a STEM degree, and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 2/21/2020 - Introduced
State Bill Page: https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-
summary?id=GA133-HB-523
HB9  COLLEGE CREDITS -- EDCHOICE SCHOLARSHIPS (JONES D, SWEENEY B) With regard to student degree completion at state institutions of higher education, to modify eligibility criteria for the Educational Choice Scholarship program, to dissolve certain academic distress commissions, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.

**Current Status:** 2/20/2020 - , (Tenth Hearing)
**Recent Status:** 2/19/2020 - , (Ninth Hearing)
2/18/2020 - , (Eighth Hearing)


SB89  CAREER-TECHNICAL EDUCATION -- EDCHOICE (HUFFMAN M) With regard to career-technical education and the compensation of joint vocational school districts located in enterprise zones, to make changes regarding STEM school report cards, to prohibit the use of value-added data for evaluations of career-technical educators, to revise the law on community school fiscal officer liability, to make changes regarding school financing studies by the Department of Education, to revise the eligibility and operation of the Educational Choice Scholarship program, to dissolve existing academic distress commissions, to place a moratorium on the creation of academic distress commissions, to establish the School Transformation Board, to rename the income-based expansion of the Educational Choice Scholarship program as the Buckeye Opportunity Scholarship program, and to declare an emergency.

**Current Status:** 2/12/2020 - Consideration of House Amendments; Emergency Clause 7-24, Senate Does Not Concur
**Recent Status:** 2/12/2020 - Consideration of House Amendments
2/5/2020 - **PASSED BY HOUSE**; Amended on Floor, Bill Vote 88-7, Emergency Clause 92-3

**Position:** Amend

HB164  STUDENT RELIGIOUS RIGHTS (GINTER T) Regarding student religious expression and to entitle the act the "Ohio Student Religious Liberties Act of 2019."

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Senate Education, (Second Hearing)
**Recent Status:** 1/21/2020 - Senate Education, (First Hearing)
12/4/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

**Position:** Undetermined

SB219  APPRENTICE PROGRAM (WILLIAMS S) To establish a career pathways apprentice program.

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Senate Education, (First Hearing)
**Recent Status:** 10/23/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
10/15/2019 - Introduced

**Position:** Undetermined

SB218  SCHOOL START TIME (WILLIAMS S) To prohibit public schools from beginning the school day earlier than eight-thirty a.m.

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Senate Education, (First Hearing)
**Recent Status:** 10/23/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
10/15/2019 - Introduced
HB493  **SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTINUATION** (WIGGAM S) To permit a child whose parents live in different school districts to continue to attend school in the school district in which the child attended school at the beginning of the school year even if the child moves to a different school district.

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

**Recent Status:** 2/4/2020 - Introduced

**State Bill Page:** https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-SB-218

HB494  **LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM - TEACHERS** (LIGHTBODY M) To establish a loan repayment program for eligible teachers.

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

**Recent Status:** 2/4/2020 - Introduced

**State Bill Page:** https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-HB-494

SB253  **STUDENT THREAT OF VIOLENCE** (KUNZE S) Regarding expulsion of a student from a public school for communicating a threat of violence to occur on school grounds.

**Current Status:** 2/11/2020 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (Second Hearing)

**Recent Status:** 2/4/2020 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (First Hearing)
12/17/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs

**State Bill Page:** https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-SB-253

SB134  **PASSING SCHOOL BUSSES** (GAVARONE T) To make changes to the law governing passing a school bus, to create a new offense for vehicular homicide and vehicular assault related to improperly passing a stopped school bus, to make an appropriation, and to designate this the School Bus Safety Act.

**Current Status:** 2/5/2020 - PASSED BY SENATE; Vote 32-0

**Recent Status:** 2/5/2020 - Bills for Third Consideration
1/22/2020 - REPORTED OUT, Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, (Fourth Hearing)

**Position:** Undetermined

**State Bill Page:** https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-SB-134

SB262  **DIRECT PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS** (WILLIAMS S) To require the direct payment of state funding to community schools and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics schools; to require the direct payment of K-12 state scholarships; and to make an appropriation.

**Current Status:** 2/5/2020 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee

**Recent Status:** 1/27/2020 - Introduced
HB123  SCHOOL SAFETY TRAINING (HOLMES G, MANNING G) With regard to school security and youth suicide awareness education and training.

Current Status: 2/4/2020 - BILL AMENDED, Senate Education, (Fourth Hearing)
Recent Status: 1/21/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, Senate Education, (Third Hearing)
10/29/2019 - Senate Education, (Second Hearing)

Position: Amend


SB34  SCHOOL EMPLOYEES AND EDUCATOR LICENSURE (KUNZE S) Regarding school employee employment and educator licensure and conduct.

Current Status: 2/4/2020 - REPORTED OUT, Senate Education, (Eighth Hearing)
Recent Status: 1/28/2020 - Senate Education, (Eighth Hearing)
12/3/2019 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, Senate Education, (Sixth Hearing)

Position: Undetermined


HB436  DYSLEXIA SCREENINGS FOR CHILDREN (BALDRIDGE B) With regard to screening and intervention for children with dyslexia.

Current Status: 2/4/2020 - House Health, (Second Hearing)
Recent Status: 1/14/2020 - House Health, (First Hearing)
12/10/2019 - Referred to Committee House Health


HB409  STUDENT ATTENDANCE - ONLINE SCHOOLS (KOehler K) Regarding student attendance at internet- or computer-based community schools that are not dropout prevention and recovery schools.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (Third Hearing)
Recent Status: 1/23/2020 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (Second Hearing)
12/10/2019 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (First Hearing)

Position: Undetermined


HB448  SCHOOL CREDIT APPROVAL (BOYD J) To authorize school credit for approved programs offered at times outside the normal school day.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education
Recent Status: 12/12/2019 - Introduced
HB447  SCHOOL SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JORDAN K) To establish the School Safety Advisory Committee.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

Recent Status: 12/12/2019 - Introduced


HB478  EDUCATIONAL CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY (MILLER A, MIRANDA J) To make changes regarding the eligibility criteria for the Educational Choice scholarship program.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

Recent Status: 1/23/2020 - Introduced


HB459  STUDENT PARTICIPATION - EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (MILLER A, MILLER J) To prohibit a coach, director, or supervisor of an extracurricular activity from restricting student participation in other extracurricular activities.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

Recent Status: 12/23/2019 - Introduced


HB465  SCHOOL ZONE LOCATIONS (MANNING G) To authorize the creation of school zones around specified preschools.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education

Recent Status: 1/14/2020 - Introduced


SB102  DYSLEXIA SCREENING PROGRAM (BRENNER A, LEHNER P) To establish the Dyslexia Screening Program for school districts and other public schools.

Current Status: 1/28/2020 - Senate Education, (Sixth Hearing)

Recent Status: 1/21/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, Senate Education, (Fifth Hearing)

Position: Undetermined


HB310  SCHOOL BULLYING AND HAZING (GREENSPAN D) To enact the "Ohio Anti-Bullying and Hazing Act" with regard to school discipline and bullying and hazing policies at public schools and colleges.

Current Status: 1/23/2020 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (Fifth Hearing)

Recent Status: 1/21/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, House Primary and Secondary Education, (Fourth Hearing)

11/19/2019 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (Fourth Hearing)
HB231  FREE EPINEPHRINE PROGRAMS  (GREENSPAN D)  To require the Department of Education to notify public and private schools of free epinephrine autoinjector programs and to enact the "Allison Rose Suhy Act" with regard to food allergy training for public schools and institutions of higher education.

Current Status: 1/23/2020 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (Third Hearing)
Recent Status: 1/21/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, House Primary and Secondary Education, (Second Hearing)
5/21/2019 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (First Hearing)

SB248  SCHOOL STORM SHELTERS  (SCHAFFER T)  To extend until November 30, 2022, the moratorium on the building code requirement for storm shelters for school construction projects.

Current Status: 1/22/2020 - Senate General Government and Agency Review, (First Hearing)
Recent Status: 12/11/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate General Government and Agency Review
12/2/2019 - Introduced

HB360  PUBLIC SCHOOLS-WATER STATIONS  (CRAWLEY E, HILLYER B)  To require water bottle filling stations and drinking fountains in certain public school buildings.

Current Status: 1/22/2020 - House Commerce and Labor, (Second Hearing)
Recent Status: 11/6/2019 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)
10/9/2019 - Referred to Committee House Commerce and Labor

HB321  CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION  (LIPPS S, KELLY B)  With respect to age-appropriate student instruction in child sexual abuse and sexual violence prevention and in-service staff training in child sexual abuse prevention.

Current Status: 1/21/2020 - House Primary and Secondary Education, (First Hearing)
Recent Status: 11/5/2019 - REPORTED OUT, House Health, (Third Hearing)
10/15/2019 - House Health, (Second Hearing)

SB200  PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT-DYSLEXIA  (LEHNER P, BRENNER A)  With regard to professional development for screening and intervention for children with dyslexia.

Current Status: 1/21/2020 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, Senate Education, (First Hearing)
Recent Status: 10/29/2019 - Senate Education, (First Hearing)
10/29/2019 - Senate Education, (First Hearing)
SB147  OHIO SCHOOL MARSHAL PROGRAM (HOAGLAND F) To create the Ohio School Marshal Program.

Current Status: 1/21/2020 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (Second Hearing)

Recent Status: 11/6/2019 - Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, (First Hearing)
6/4/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs

Position: Undetermined


SB225  CHILD ABUSE REPORTING (LEHNER P) To require public schools to post signs with a child abuse reporting telephone number.

Current Status: 1/21/2020 - Senate Government Oversight and Reform, (First Hearing)

Recent Status: 10/23/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Government Oversight and Reform
10/16/2019 - Introduced

Position: Undetermined


******************************************************************************

Capitol Square in Review

BALLOT ISSUES

In a party-line vote Monday, the Ohio Ballot Board split a proposed elections reform constitutional amendment, "Secure and Fair Elections," into four separate issues. The board also certified a proposed amendment limiting Ohio legislators to a 16-year lifetime term limit as one issue. The proposed elections reform amendment was submitted by Ohioans for Secure and Fair Elections and backed by the ACLU of Ohio, and would put a number of election-related provisions in Ohio's Constitution, including automatic voter registration, guaranteed early voting periods and same-day registration, among other provisions. The campaign group responded with a lawsuit Thursday, saying the split violates Ohio Supreme Court precedent set in 2010 on a case involving the health care freedom amendment that's not part of the Ohio Constitution. But the group also filed with the attorney general's office for approval of four petition summaries on the issue as split by the board.

FY20-21 BUDGET

Major tax revenue sources exceeded estimates by nearly $40 million, and timing issues pushed the overage to more than $100 million in February. The state is almost a quarter billion dollars ahead of forecasts for this fiscal year so far, according to preliminary data for the month from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM).

CHILDREN/FAMILIES
The Children Services Transformation Advisory Council on Tuesday began to draft some of the recommendations that could end up in its final report to Gov. Mike DeWine, focusing the day’s deliberations on prevention, practice and workforce topics.

EDUCATION

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) reports that its testing assessment vendor, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), has been acquired by Cambium Learning Group so AIR Assessment will now be known as Cambium Assessment, Inc.

State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria chose cut scores slightly above the "basic" performance level as the new "competency" threshold for Algebra and English assessments under Ohio's new graduation requirements for the classes of 2023 and beyond.

Families and schools suing over delay in the state's EdChoice application window on Monday again urged the Ohio Supreme Court to expedite their case.

Emergency plans that schools are required to submit to the state should include responses to flu and other disease outbreaks as a best practice, and the Ohio Department of Education is encouraging schools to review their plans in light of the spread of coronavirus.

Preschools set in the natural environment should be licensed separately from traditional preschools, Cleveland Metroparks Preschool Administrator Beverly Walborn said Wednesday. "Right now, all the licensing policies refer to indoor preschools, and not to outdoor preschools," Walborn said during the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) 2020 Wildlife Diversity Conference on Ohio State University's campus. Her organization, called Ohio Nature-Based Early Childhood Education, is a group of educators that either currently participate in a program or would like to do so.

An Ohio Department of Education (ODE) panel assigned to establish a framework for how to educate the "whole child" held a broad discussion Thursday morning, with members discussing what supports schools and community partners can provide to keep students engaged and willing to challenge themselves in the classroom. The Whole Child Advisory Group brought together more than 40 teachers, administrators, school counselors, educational service center officials and other service providers to provide input on high-level concepts to guide the work of the department until a June meeting where members will discuss how to implement services.

ELECTIONS 2020

The Tuesday, March 17 primary ballot features numerous lawmakers looking to land offices in local government, some even the same positions they occupied before coming to the Statehouse. Current members of the General Assembly on the ballot include Reps. John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake), running for Lake County commissioner; Steve Hambley (R-Brunswick), running for Medina County commissioner; Gary Scherer (R-Circleville), running for Pickaway County commissioner; Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek), running for Greene County commissioner; and John Becker (R-Cincinnati), running for Clermont County commissioner; and Sen. Dave Burke (R-Marysville), who is running for Union County commissioner. In Summit County, Rep. Anthony DeVitis (R-Uniontown) is running for Summit County Council.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Tuesday said that 243,719 absentee ballots have been requested by mail or in-person and that 84,149 have been cast statewide as of Monday, March 2. Of the 243,719 requested absentee ballots, 40,442 were requested in person and cast. Another 43,707 have been cast by mail, with 159,570 outstanding absentee ballots.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE
The Ohio Legislative Service Commission (LSC) is now accepting applications through Wednesday, April 1, for its 13-month Legislative and Media Production Fellowship Program. The commission will hire 24 fellows to serve in the Ohio General Assembly during 2021.

In other legislative action, Senate Finance Committee reported out SB89 (Maharath), which would create the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Island Affairs Commission; and Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee reported out SB252 (Hackett-Craig), regarding treatment coverage for stage four advanced metastatic cancer.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Coronavirus preparations and precautions were at the forefront this week, as Gov. Mike DeWine and Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther announced restrictions on attendance at the massive Arnold Sports Festival, DeWine convened a states summit for local public health officials on COVID-19, and the Ohio Department of Health started publishing statistics on suspected cases in the state daily instead of twice weekly. As of Thursday afternoon, Ohio still had no confirmed cases, but the number of persons under investigation (PUI) increased from one to three. DeWine and Ginther initially announced an agreement with Arnold festival organizers to bar most spectators and call off the trade show, but after organizers came back with requests for more leeway, Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton issued a formal order to ban spectators except for those with tickets to finals events and parents watching their minor children compete. At the state public health summit Thursday, DeWine and Acton stressed a message of preparedness, and Acton said the state had received a testing kit that, once calibrated, will allow for faster results than the previous approach of sending samples to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. DeWine also convened an advisory group of hospital and physician representatives to help steer the state's response.

Speaking in Dayton Friday, Gov. Mike DeWine joined mental health and suicide prevention leaders to unveil the first state collaborative plan on suicide prevention for the next three years. Plan priorities include the state's raising awareness of warning signs and risk factors; concentrating efforts to integrate suicide prevention practices into health care, public safety and education services on the local and state levels; building suicide prevention capacity and infrastructure at the organizational, local, and state levels; focusing prevention efforts on groups identified as having higher rates of suicide, including youths ages 10-24, males ages 25-59 and veterans and military members; and standardizing, gathering and utilizing data to continuously inform and evaluate the state's approach.

A report from LeadingAge shows that Ohio is among the top states in the nation for its number of nursing home closures, with 26 nursing homes closing over a four-year span, ranking it the third-highest in the nation, tied with California. The authors write that nursing home quality ratings awarded through the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have little bearing on whether or not a nursing home closes, but instead closures are related to other factors, such as adequate Medicaid payments, regulatory reform and the creation of a "critical access" designation for rural nursing homes.

The U.S. Supreme Court will revisit its ruling on Congress' use of taxing powers to institute a health care purchase mandate, agreeing Monday to hear a multi-state lawsuit alleging elimination of the tax penalty for failing to secure insurance renders the mandate unconstitutional. Justices issued an order Monday accepting an appeal from the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled that without an associated penalty, the mandate is void. A U.S. District Court judge had reached the same conclusion and found elimination of the mandate requires upending the entire federal Affordable Care Act (ACA), but the Fifth Circuit ordered the lower court to reconsider the issue of whether the mandate is severable from the broader health care law.

An Ohio University (OU) researcher recently published a study in the journal Depression and Anxiety that suggests marijuana use, especially for military personnel experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, may negatively affect suicidal thoughts and behavior.

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy (OBP) and Mount Carmel Health System (MCHS) have reached a settlement regarding violations related to the alleged actions of Dr. William Husel, who has been charged with 25 counts of murder for overprescribing the powerful opioid fentanyl.
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Ohio University (OU) recently announced that "voluntary separation plans" and "early retirement incentive plans" are available to 608 faculty members. The development is due to decreased enrollments and is part of an effort to rebalance the university's budget, according to a release from OU.

The University of Toledo (UT) recently announced two new undergraduate degrees in data science and analytics. Beginning in fall 2020, UT will debut a bachelor of arts degree in data analytics in the College of Arts and Letters, and a bachelor of science degree in data science in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

**POLLS/STUDIES**

Nearly half of black Ohioans in a new survey said crime, drugs, violence and discrimination are the top problems in the state. The survey, touted as the first to significantly ask black Ohioans about the issues most important to them, was conducted by the University of Akron's Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics in conjunction with the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus Foundation. The $55,000 poll was paid for jointly by the foundation and the university, which used endowment funds set aside for research purposes.

**TECHNOLOGY**

Gov. Mike DeWine announced Thursday the creation of BroadbandOhio, an office dedicated to improving access to high-speed Internet across Ohio. Establishing an office committed to increasing high-speed Internet access was part of the Ohio Broadband Strategy released by InnovateOhio in December 2019.

**TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) announced that its new "SmartLane" in Columbus will see its speed limit increased when active starting Monday. The "SmartLane" corridor is the first such corridor ODOT has established in the state, running from downtown Columbus to the east outerbelt in the capital city along Interstate 670. On Monday, ODOT is raising the speed limit when the SmartLane is open from 45 mph to 55 mph.