This March 18, 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.

Breaking News

OESCA Website Provides Single Access Point for Latest Information
The Ohio Department of Education has provided an updated FAQ for services to students with disabilities. These newly released FAQs can be accessed at: http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Student-Supports/Coronavirus/Considerations-for-Students-with-Disabilities-During-Ohio%E2%80%99s-Ordered-School-Building-Closure.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US

JFS Issues Guidance for Temporary Pandemic Childcare Centers
Following up on the Governor’s order related to temporary pandemic childcare for healthcare workers’ students, ODJFS issued guidance today that can be access at the following link: http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/CoronavirusAndChildcare/

Association Update and Resources

OESCA Website Provides Single Access Point for Latest Information
The Ohio ESC Association is working to identify and post the latest information and government resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic at www.oesca.org. The site will be updated daily.

OESCA has also set up Google Hangout and Google Drive to provide a communication platform and resources for ESC personnel.

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:

HB521  LOAN FORGIVENESS INFORMATION AVAILABILITY (SWEENEY B) To require the Chancellor of Higher Education and public service organizations to disseminate information regarding the federal public service loan forgiveness programs.

Current Status: 3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Higher Education
Recent Status: 2/20/2020 - Introduced
HB520  LOAN FORGIVENESS - PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  (SWEENEY B) 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.

Current Status: 3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Finance
Recent Status: 2/20/2020 - Introduced

HB529  DISTRESS COMMISSIONS - ONE-TIME AUDITS  (MILLER J, LEPORÉ-HAGAN M) To require one-time performance audits of school districts with a current academic distress commission.

Current Status: 3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education
Recent Status: 3/3/2020 - Introduced

HB532  MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION  (BRINKMAN T, KELLY B) 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.

Current Status: 3/10/2020 - Referred to Committee House Primary and Secondary Education
Recent Status: 3/3/2020 - Introduced

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

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

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)


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


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

Recent Status: 2/19/2020 - (Ninth Hearing)
2/18/2020 - (Eighth Hearing)


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 careertechnical 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


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

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

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

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
  

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


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


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)
  

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.

### 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)

### 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)

### 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)

### 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)
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)
  10/29/2019 - Senate Education, (Fourth Hearing)
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)

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)

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

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Capitol Square in Review

ADDITION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Gov. Mike DeWine and Attorney General Dave Yost announced Wednesday that they have worked out an agreement with local governments representing 85 percent of the state’s population on a plan to jointly approach settlement negotiations and litigation with drug manufacturers and distributors of opioids. DeWine and Yost said the list of local government entities joining the "OneOhio" agreement includes 73 of Ohio’s 88 counties, with participation from rural, suburban and urban areas alike.

BALLOT ISSUES

The Ohio Supreme Court agreed Friday to a request from Ohioans for Secure and Fair Elections to expedite the lawsuit challenging the Ohio Ballot Board's decision to split the campaign group's proposed constitutional amendment into four initiatives. Justices set a schedule for all briefing to conclude by Thursday, March 19. The campaign group also had submitted four petition summaries on the issue as split by the board, based on a two-pronged approach, and Attorney General Dave Yost approved those summaries.
The Ohio Attorney General's Office rejected the summary language for a proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution Tuesday that would make changes to Ohio's marijuana laws -- the "Amendment to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol" -- which had been filed with the AG's office on Monday, March 2. According to a letter sent to attorney Donald McTigue, who represents the group behind the proposal, the AG found that the summary language "completely fails" to inform a potential signer that "findings and declarations" listed in the amendment would be elevated "to a constitutional standard."

CENSUS

Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA) Director Lydia Mihalik, Rep. Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville) and several Southeast Ohio mayors on Tuesday discussed the importance of high census participation for the region and how that will be achieved, including ways they may adapt to coronavirus concerns.

The Census Bureau announced that the 2020 Census invitations will arrive Thursday, March 12 through Friday, March 20. During this period, about 95 percent or 143 million households in the country will receive an initial invitation to respond to the 2020 Census.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine Tuesday launched the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library Program in Hamilton County -- the 16th county since December to be added to the program. This brings the total number of counties participating in the program, which sees all children from birth to age five receiving a free, new book once a month mailed to their home, to 67. A total of 140,000 Ohio children statewide are currently receiving free books.

CORONAVIRUS

Ohio leaders confirmed the first cases of the coronavirus strain known as COVID-19 in the state and escalated the official response to the virus' spread over the week, eventually getting to the point of ordering schools to close and barring most gatherings of 100 or more people. The Ohio Department of Health is posting daily updates on confirmed and suspected cases and test results at www.coronavirus.ohio.gov and has established a call center hotline at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634), which is available from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Health Director (ODH) Amy Acton held daily press conferences over the week. On Saturday, they announced ODH's capability to perform virus testing on its own and plans for hospitals and private labs to complement that capability in the days that followed. On Monday, they confirmed the first three cases -- a couple who'd been on a Nile River cruise and a man who'd attended the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) conference in Washington, D.C. That prompted DeWine also to declare an official state of emergency. On Wednesday, the administration confirmed the state's first case of "community spread" to a 53-year-old Stark County man with no history of travel outside the U.S. and no known contact with someone who had the virus. On Thursday, ODH confirmed a fifth case and said at the time that 52 people were under investigation for suspected cases, while 30 had seen negative test results for the virus. DeWine also issued protocols to limit visiting at nursing facilities and orders to restrict mass gatherings and close school buildings for three weeks, the latter beginning at the end of the school day on Monday, March 16. The mass gatherings order includes exceptions for religious gatherings and other activities protected by the First Amendment, and is not meant to apply to stores, restaurants and transportation hubs. He telegraphed the mass gatherings order a day ahead of time, encouraging professional sports teams and others to take steps on their own, and many followed by barring spectators from games and then cancelling tournaments and suspending and/or delaying seasons. The governor also urged all Ohio college and universities to move to online classes only, something many institutions announced plans to do over the week.

Numerous government agencies cancelled or drastically scaled back planned meetings and events. The Bureau of Workers' Compensation cancelled its Board of Directors meeting and the annual Safety Congress & Expo, which was set to bring thousands of people to Columbus but instead offered some online-only sessions. The Statehouse suspended guided tours, and the Ohio Democratic Party postponed its Legacy Dinner, among other cancellations.
The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Superintendent Paolo DeMaria said state leaders are in talks about waivers for testing requirements, report cards, attendance reporting and the like should the virus start to prompt school closings. They also encouraged schools to stay in contact with local health and emergency planning officials, and to cancel any large gatherings. ODE has an FAQ for school-related coronavirus concerns at its website, www.education.ohio.gov.

Lawmakers and staff in the Ohio General Assembly took precautions after staff were potentially exposed to the virus at out-of-town conferences. An intern in the Senate self-quarantined after attending the AIPAC conference, and House staff who attended the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) stayed home from work as well.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said it would grant waivers to rules for free and reduced-price school meals amid the outbreak -- specifically the requirement that meals be served in a group setting -- to help ensure students can access meals should schools close.

Democratic presidential candidates Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders cancelled planned rallies in Cleveland Tuesday as a precaution against further spread of the coronavirus.

Swiftly passing federal paid sick leave legislation is one of the most important actions the government could take to blunt the spread of novel coronavirus, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) told reporters in a call Wednesday. Brown introduced a bill on that as part of a broader package put forward by Senate Democrats, saying all are at risk when those without paid sick leave have to work while ill to avoid going without pay. U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles) introduced similar legislation in the U.S. House Wednesday as well, and Brown said he expected that would be passed by the House in the coming days.

Speaking to the press and general public over Facebook Live Thursday, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost discussed how local governments can change practices due to coronavirus and called on Ohioans not to buy excessive quantities of products such as toilet paper or hand sanitizer.

In a video message to schools Thursday, Superintendent Paolo DeMaria sought to reassure them that state leaders are prepared to waive testing and other requirements and that it's safe for schools to host polling locations in next week's March 17 primary election.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) followed Monday's executive order declaring a state of emergency from the coronavirus with a six-page order of its own Thursday urging regulated utilities to reexamine their policies and billing charges and seek needed approval from the state to prevent service disconnections at homes and offices and to head off infection from "social contact" with consumers.

Policy Matters Ohio (PMO) said Thursday that "workers, employers and policymakers" all have steps they can take to ensure the unemployment compensation (UC) system provides the maximum support possible. "Ohio's unemployment compensation system is an essential support, especially when the economy turns down," PMO Research Director Zach Schiller said in a release. "Steps should be taken to bolster it so it can help a larger share of the unemployed, including those who are able and willing to work but unable to do so because of coronavirus's effect on the economy."

Ohio State University (OSU) announced Thursday that it would continue with virtual instruction for the remainder of the spring semester after previously cancelling in-person classes until March 30.

The Ohio Republican Party Thursday said it will stop participation in any public, face-to-face events due to concern over the coronavirus until April 12, including a Summit County Lincoln Day Dinner that was to feature Vice President Mike Pence.

CORRECTIONS

Gov. Mike DeWine ordered the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) Monday to implement a raft of changes to state monitoring of former inmates proposed by his Working Group on Post-Release Control.
Reforms include real-time crime scene matching with GPS data on ex-offenders in a central database, a 34 percent drop in parole caseloads, and specialized parole officers for sex offenders and the mentally ill, among others. DeWine says DRC will coordinate with the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) and InnovateOhio to equip law enforcement to match the physical addresses of crime scenes to the GPS locations of ex-felons.

EDUCATION

A new collaborative pilot project will use $1 million in existing funds over the next two years to expand broadband access, allowing students in Monroe County's rural Switzerland School District to talk with mental health counselors via videoconferencing known as telehealth. Developed as a partnership between InnovateOhio, Ohio Children's Initiatives, the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) and the newly announced BroadbandOhio, the project is part of the state's broadband strategy to expand access to the approximately one million Ohioans without high-speed Internet.

The State Board of Education postponed its planned vote on updated operating standards for Ohio schools Tuesday following member questions and objections to changes from representatives of private schools. The operating standards, which set minimum expectations for schools on topics from basic health and safety to staffing to graduation and course requirements, are due for the five-year review mandated for all state administrative rules. During the public testimony portion of the board agenda, the Ohio Association of Independent Schools (OAIS) and Buckeye Christian Schools Organization (BCSO) expressed opposition to rule language approved by the board's Continuous Improvement Committee.

Ohio charter schools with for-profit management companies would have three years to switch to a nonprofit operator under House legislation announced Wednesday to cap what management companies are paid. The bill from Reps. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville) and Jeff Crossman (D-Parma) also would subject charter schools to the same laws as district schools for state audits and open records. Leadership from Ohio teachersâ€™ unions joined the lawmakers Wednesday at a press conference to show support for the proposal.

ELECTIONS

Legislation that would create a more streamlined voter registration process began hearings in the House Wednesday, with Secretary of State Frank LaRose's office recommending that lawmakers give a longer implementation period on the legislation. HB540 (G. Manning) is similar to SB186 (Sykes-N. Manning), which is being heard in the Senate and already has received proponent testimony from LaRose himself last month. The sponsor of HB540, Rep. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville), told the House State and Local Government Committee Wednesday that the bill will allow Ohioans to register to vote or update the address on their voter registration when they go to the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to get or renew a driver's license or state identification card.

A week before Ohio holds its primary election, a national Quinnipiac University Poll shows that the Democratic contest is essentially a two-person race. According to survey of 1,261 self-identified registered voters nationwide, 54 percent of Democrats and Independents who lean Democratic said they would like to see Joe Biden win the Democratic nomination, while 35 percent would like to see Bernie Sanders win.

My School, My Choice announced that it has released a 2020 primary election Ohio voter guide. The group said it compiled the guide through a candidate survey so its members and supporters could understand the positions of legislative candidates on school choice issues. Their answers include a copy of the original survey sent to the candidates. Those who are not included in the results did not respond. A copy of the guide can be found at https://tinyurl.com/rnuxkvr.

As the state continues to respond to the first confirmed cases of COVID-19, also known as coronavirus, Secretary of State Frank LaRose said Tuesday that he has ordered all polling locations located in nursing or senior facilities to be moved elsewhere for the Tuesday, March 17 primary.
Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said it's a "moral disgrace" that U.S. and Ohio political leaders aren't doing more to address the number one fear among American children -- being shot at school. "I will do everything in my power, and I will never give up this fight until we stop the carnage that is occurring as a consequence of the NRA and gun manufacturers. If you stand with me, we'll pass laws to ban killer assault weapons and hold gun-makers liable. We can do this, and the reason we can is because of the moms standing behind me," the former vice president said during a Columbus campaign event at Driving Park Community Center, where he was joined by Moms Demand Action Founder Shannon Watts, Brady President Kris Brown and local gun violence survivor Crystal Turner.

Democratic presidential candidates Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders cancelled planned rallies in Cleveland Tuesday as a precaution against further spread of the coronavirus.

With one week to go until the Tuesday, March 17 primary, Secretary of State Frank LaRose said last Tuesday that 336,531 absentee ballots have been requested by-mail or in-person, and that 194,522 votes have been cast statewide.

The Ohio Republican Party said Wednesday that it has sent a cease and desist letter to 65th House District candidate Joe Dills after it claimed he is sending mail to households in Clermont County claiming he has the state party's endorsement. The party's State Central Committee voted to endorse Dills earlier this year over former U.S. Rep. Jean Schmidt for the Republican nomination for the seat, but pulled the endorsement after reports emerged of his use of the dating website Ashley Madison, which brands itself as a website for married people seeking affairs.

The following endorsements were made over the week:

- Ohio Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati) announced he is endorsing Joe Biden for president.

- Communications Workers of America, District 4 endorsed U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Columbus) for Congress.

- The presidential campaign of Joe Biden announced the endorsements of Richard Cordray, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther, Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, Sen. Tina Maharath (D-Canal Winchester) and Reps. Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati), Catherine Ingram (D-Cincinnati), Sedrick Denson (D-Cincinnati), former U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus, former U.S. Rep. David Mann, Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady, Franklin County Commissioner Marilyn Brown, Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus, Hamilton County Commissioner Victoria Parks, Columbus City Council President Shannon Hardin, Columbus City Councilman Rob Dorans, Columbus City Councilman Emmanuel V. Remy, Columbus City Councilwoman Priscilla R. Tyson, Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin, Franklin County Clerk of Courts Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Columbus City Auditor Megan Kilgore, Franklin County Recorder Danny O'Connor, Franklin County Coroner Anahi Ortiz, South-Western City Schools Board of Education member Anthony Caldwell, Montgomery County Auditor Karl Keith, Montgomery County Recorder Brandon McClain, former U.S. Attorney Ben Glassman, Ohio Young Democrats President Jen House, and Ohio Young Democrats Vice President Chris Anderson.


- Reps. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron), Kristen Boggs (D-Columbus), Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo), and Richard Brown (D-Canal Winchester) endorsed Joe Biden for president.

**EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT**

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) released January jobs numbers Friday showing the state's unemployment rate was 4.1 percent, down slightly from the 4.2 percent reported for December, though the state's non-agricultural wage and salary employment decreased 6,300 over the month from a revised 5,591,900 in December to 5,585,600 in January. Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released national unemployment numbers for February, showing the nation added 273,000 jobs over the month and that the unemployment rate dropped to 3.5 percent from 3.6 percent in January.
ENERGY

House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) joined state and energy industry leaders Thursday in a groundbreaking for the Hillcrest Solar facility, the largest photovoltaic project in Ohio history. When completed, the 200-megawatt facility will power approximately 39,000 homes. It is Ohio's first utility-scale solar project and is part of its effort to use clean air resources. In July 2019, Gov. Mike DeWine signed HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) into law, creating the Ohio Clean Air Program meant to facilitate and encourage electricity production.

ENVIRONMENT

American political leaders who ignore climate change science need to be held accountable at the ballot box for the planet to avoid disaster, according to former Gov. John Kasich, former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Hollywood icon/former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. "It is going to change when you will not tolerate any more politicians who want to put their heads in the sand. They will become afraid to go to a town hall meeting where they don't have an answer for this," Kasich told a crowd at Otterbein University. It hosted the launch for "World War Zero," a broad coalition of leaders in politics, business, national security, science, arts and entertainment who want to address climate change.

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine on Tuesday signed HB158 (Blessing), legislation on driving privileges. It authorizes a court to grant limited privileges to an offender on a first offense for failure to maintain financial responsibility for a motor vehicle. The legislation also waives the filing fee on a petition for limited driving privileges for any individual whose license is suspended as a result of failure to maintain proof of financial responsibility and who qualifies as indigent.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Business Relations Program recently was named a 2020 Harvard Innovations in American Government award finalist by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University. According to a release from OOD, the innovations award has been given out for more than 30 years and recognizes public-sector programs that make American government more efficient and effective in addressing social problems and providing public services. This year, the award program specifically sought out models of government innovation promoting economic opportunity for all.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Gov. Mike DeWine recently announced nearly $8 million in awards for Ohio's public colleges and universities as part of the Ohio Department of Higher Education's (ODHE) Regionally Aligned Priorities in Delivering Skills (RAPIDS) program. The program is meant to help public institutions purchase up-to-date equipment and increase students' job preparedness, according to a release from ODHE.