

Ohio Speech & Hearing Governmental Affairs Committee (OSHGAC)

comprised of three representatives each from

Ohio Academy of Audiology

Ohio Council of Speech and Hearing Administrators

Ohio School Speech Pathology and Educational Audiology Coalition

Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association

July, 2023

Submitted by Jane Mariani-Walker, Chrissie Eshenbaugh

Each organization is represented on the OSHGAC Board by three members, yet each organization gets one vote on issues. GAC has been, and will continue to be, a vital force in advocacy for our speech and hearing professions and our clients. Despite a challenging past year, the dedication of OSSPEAC and other member organizations to GAC's mission remains solid.

At present, all three of our OSSPEAC representative positions are filled: Jane Mariani-Walker, Bethany Whidden, and Chrissie Eshenbaugh currently bring our school-based concerns to discuss as GAC works to influence the legislative and administrative policy-making process.

OSHGAC will host a joint event among its member organizations to provide free PD and CEs about Advocacy. A virtual presentation is tentatively planned for mid-September. The subcommittee to host this met Thursday, April 13 and has begun working on the details. MANY thanks to Ellen Reaser and Sarah Prahler for their assistance fielding questions about obtaining ASHA CEUs for this event.

Proponent testimony/support for legislation has yielded positive results. Bethany Whiddon provided proponent testimony during legislative sub-committee meetings last fall; the legislature raised the eligibility age for the Developmental Delay disability category to conform to federal guidelines. Now, if transition reevaluation cannot determine the reason the child continues to manifest delays, the student may continue to receive intensive intervention while data continues to be gathered, and while identified as having a Developmental Delay until age 10 years. In April, school districts received information from ODE about the legislation's implementation.

Current Legislative news:

HB 198, known as Madeline's Law, would require health insurers to cover the cost of hearing aids for Ohioans ages 21 and under. By an overwhelming majority, the bill passed the House and

moves to the Senate for reconciliation. Proponent testimony was provided by OSHGAC Chairperson Jane Mariani-Walker and two other OSHGAC Board members. When lawmakers return in August, OSHGAC will be monitoring and potentially recommending organizations to act.

SB 50 would make changes to the law governing 9-1-1 service and would repeal program requirements for emergency-service-telecommunicator training. The possibility of using text to access 9-1-1 would be invaluable for individuals who have hearing loss and/or a severe expressive communication disorder, like stuttering. On June 6 it was reported out of the Senate Financial Institutions and Technology committee after its eighth hearing.

The conference committee on HB 33 (Edwards), the state's omnibus budget bill for the FY24-25 operating budget, did not meet until Friday afternoon but then worked through nearly 900 items of difference between the Senate and House versions of the bill. The Legislature concluded its work on the budget on Friday, June 30 just ahead of the start of FY24, thus necessitating the enactment of a three-day interim budget. Late Monday night, Governor DeWine signed at the very end of the three-day interim budget enacted by the Legislature to give time both for enrolling the final version of the budget and for the governor to review what was passed in the now over 6,000-page budget. On its July 4 release, the governor had exercised his line-item veto of 44 items in the budget bill. Two years ago, the governor vetoed only 14 items.

HB33 includes dozens and dozens of individual amendments. Among major changes is the inclusion of SB1 (Reineke) which removes most of the authority of the State Board of Education, giving it to a new state education department under the governor, the renamed and reformed Department of Education and Workforce (DEW).

GPG followed up with a summary of Governor Mike DeWine's July 5 press conference, which included his explanation of reasons for some of his 44 line-item vetoes in HB33. DeWine said he had set up transition teams to guide the DEW's implementation. He also declined to say whether he thinks transfer of most education policy authority to a cabinet position from the State Board of Education should lead to changes of the board's structure. The 19-person board has 11 members elected to represent districts of more than one million people apiece, plus eight gubernatorial appointees. "I'm going to pass on that. I think we have to see how this thing plays out. They certainly still have functions, and I don't see an immediate need to do anything about that," DeWine said. Before taking press questions, DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted spent more than half an hour outlining how the final version of the budget bill aligned to the goals they laid out in the beginning: reforms to nursing home oversight and quality incentives, greater emphasis and resources for literacy instruction aligned to the "science of reading," investment

in the build-out of a community mental health system, policies to encourage more housing development, and funding for economic development, among many other provisions.

Additionally in education, the budget requires school districts and schools to administer dyslexia screenings and interventions to students in grades K-6 that transfer into the district or school midyear.

The bill expands eligibility for the Autism Scholarship Program to a child who receives an autism diagnosis, who is identified with autism by the child's resident school district, or who has an IEP from the school district with services related to autism (under current law, a child is eligible for the Program if the resident district has identified the child with autism and developed an IEP for the child). Requires school districts to develop an education plan for a child who is eligible for the Autism Scholarship Program based on an autism diagnosis but who does not have an individualized education program.

Language was included to increase the base minimum teacher salary from \$30,000 to \$40,000. Adjusts the statutory stepped teacher salary schedule based on the change to the base minimum salary, using the same percentages for each step as under current law (the stepped teacher salary).

Requires the ODH Director to specify in rule Duchenne muscular dystrophy as a disorder for newborn screening to begin 240 days after the section's effective date. Despite efforts by OSHGAC and multiple other groups, CMV screening did not get included with ODH's newborn screening tests.

The omnibus bill also contains additional language for art and music therapy. The language states that Art therapy will be licensed under the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board, and music therapists will be licensed under the State Medical Board.

Earlier this past Spring during hearings, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Director Kevin Miller told the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee that Ohio would put up enough state money to draw down the maximum federal match for services to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs for the first time in about 15 years under the executive budget proposal in HB33. Miller said that Ohio gets \$3.69 in federal match for every dollar of state funding. OOD will "strategically expand" employment-related services with this additional money, building on partnerships in higher education, career centers and with hundreds of businesses. According to the OOD Redbook from the Legislative Service Commission (LSC), the agency is in for a substantial boost in General Revenue Fund (GRF)

support over the biennium, from shy of \$20 million per year in the current budget to \$27.2 million in FY24 and \$32.4 million in FY25 under Gov. Mike DeWine's executive proposal. That represents GRF funding increases of 37.3 percent and 19.1 percent and total funding changes of 7.3 percent and 8.1 percent per fiscal year. This revision passed and the rule has been added to JCARR's Regular Agenda for the upcoming meeting on July 20th. Additionally, the rule was "Refiled" with JCARR on July 7th.

A new budget structure will support existing shared services efforts of the Ohio School for the Deaf and Ohio State School for the Blind while maintaining them as separate entities, the shared superintendent for both schools told a House budget subcommittee. In testimony to the House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, Superintendent Lou Maynus said the schools already cooperate on afterschool programming, nursing, child nutrition, transportation and other administrative functions. The executive budget proposes \$33.35 million in FY24 and \$33.74 million in FY25, representing increases of 8.1 percent and 1.4 percent, respectively.