



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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Chamber Adds More Priorities in Final House Budget

By a 60-39 vote largely along partisan lines, the Ohio House Finance Committee adopted its version of the two-year state operating budget (House Bill 96) last Wednesday. The handful of the Ohio Chamber's (OCC) spending priorities and policy asks previously incorporated were preserved, with a few additional Chamber-requested measures. The latest round of Chamber-requested measures rolled into the budget included:

An additional \$100 million invested in child care access

- The House made a substantial investment in child care affordability by committing \$100 million more in TANF block grant funds towards **continuation of the Governor's Child Care Choice Voucher Program**.
- This voucher program, created last year by Governor DeWine, makes child care more affordable for working families by creating additional eligibility for publicly-funded child care of up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Although the House budget appropriates \$25 million less than the Governor's proposal, the total \$200 million investment in this program remains substantial and an important validation of the Governor's effort and of the business community's advocacy.

Permanent extension of the Computer Science teacher licensure waiver

- This amendment extends the existing temporary provision allowing a school district, community school or STEM school to permit an individual who holds a valid educator license in K-12 to teach a computer science course if, prior to teaching the course, the individual completes a professional development program.
- 38% of Ohio's public high schools do NOT offer any sort of Computer Science offering, and this allows current teachers to cross-train and become able to teach Computer Science courses without a full license (ex. a math teacher who now also teaches a computer coding class, or a social studies teacher who also teaches a web design course).
- This waiver grows the number of Computer Science teachers among existing faculty, and for more K-12 schools to add technology courses that better prepare students for the modern workforce.

Creation of the “Housing Accelerator” housing development incentive program

- This amendment appropriates \$2,500,000 in each fiscal year to establish a grant program for townships and municipal corporations that adopt pro-housing policies.
- The measure is one of the Chamber's spending priorities to increase Ohio's housing availability and similar to House Bill 499 from the last General Assembly, a bill strongly supported by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce to increase housing stock through local government incentives.
- The Ohio Department of Development will administer the program, and any unexpended, unencumbered balance at the end of FY 2026 will be reappropriated for use in FY 2027.

The Ohio Chamber is now refocusing advocacy efforts to the Ohio Senate and will continue talking with our members to identify items worth supporting and opposing. If you have any questions, comments or concerns surrounding the state operating budget, please contact Rick Carfagna, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, at rcarfagna@ohiochamber.com.

HB 186 Legislative Update

Last week, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce submitted proponent testimony on House Bill 186, which seeks to address unvoted increases in property taxes that have been putting a strain on Ohioans.

Recent years have shown the hardship on Ohioans as their property tax bills have significantly increased, presenting a growing financial challenge for many residents. A study conducted by the Ohio Chamber Research Foundation and Ernst Young found that property taxes in the peer locations in Ohio were 72% higher than those of the peer locations analyzed across the county. High property taxes not only negatively impact current residents of Ohio, but they also act as a disincentive for businesses looking to relocate to our state.

Two burdensome aspects of Ohio's property tax system include the state's 20-mil floor and the exemptions from House Bill 920's tax reduction factors, which have resulted in unvoted increases in property taxes. Of Ohio's 611 school districts, almost 80% are at or near the 20-mil floor, meaning these districts are no longer subject to HB 920's protections, causing property taxes to rise dramatically as property values increase.

House Bill 186 provides a much-needed remedy to this issue by ensuring that the revenue growth of a school district won't exceed inflationary growth over the previous three years. Limiting the growth in revenue of a school district from the 20-mil floor to the rate of inflation presents a needed long-term solution to curb unvoted property tax growth and provide relief to Ohioans. This bill does not eliminate school districts' ability to seek additional funding; instead, it ensures that any revenue increase above inflation is subject to voter approval.