



Ohio budget bill: Community school provisions affecting traditional public school districts

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The version of the Budget Bill passed by the Ohio House of Representatives contains many provisions that school districts may find alarming. These provisions would increase the number and authority of community schools in Ohio (generally referred to as “charter schools” elsewhere in the nation) – including those operated by for-profit entities – while diminishing the influence of traditional public school districts.

Some of these provisions also appear in the version of the bill now in the Ohio State Senate. Others do not appear in the Senate bill, but could reappear in the final enacted version.

The community school provisions that appear to adversely impact traditional public school districts are too numerous and complex to describe fully in this article. But the following are among the provisions that are of concern:

- **Hybrid Community Schools.** The Senate version authorizes up to five qualifying traditional public schools or community schools to operate as “hybrids,” meaning that they will provide a combination of technology-based and classroom-based instruction; in the third year of the schools’ operation, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) may select an additional five schools to operate as hybrids. The implications of these provisions for community schools and school districts in general, and for credit flexibility in particular, are unclear. The provisions may have the (perhaps) unintended effect of restricting the operation of existing traditional and community school programs that already utilize varied modes of instruction. (EDUCD148, p. 153)
- **School District Property.** Enlarges the circumstances in which a school district must sell or lease property to a community school. The Senate version also requires that districts charge only \$1 for lease of property to certain community schools. (EDUCD5, p.154)
- **Selling of Services by Community School Sponsors.** The Senate version prohibits community school sponsors, including school districts, from selling any goods or services to a sponsored community school. This is directly contrary to the mode of operation currently utilized by many districts which sponsor conversion-type community schools. (EDUCD142, p. 155)
- **Permit For-Profit Community Schools.** The House version permits a community school to be established as a for-profit entity. (EDUCD111, p.156)
- **Restrictions on New Community Schools.** Lifts certain existing limitations on the establishment of new community schools. (EDUCD10, p.157)
- **Sponsor Discrimination.** The House version requires sponsors, including school districts, to sponsor community

schools without regard to the type of school proposed, how the school is owned, or involvement of for-profit entities as members of the school's corporation. (EDUCD94, p.158)

- Community School Operators. The House version requires community schools, upon expiration of a contract with an operator, to permit the operator to renew the contract. (EDUCD101, p.159)
- Establishment of Community Schools Without Sponsors. The House version authorizes new and existing community schools to operate without sponsors. (EDUCD92, p. 164)
- Renewal of Sponsorship Contract. The House version makes renewal of a contract between a community school and its sponsor subject to approval of the school's operator. (EDUCD103, p. 165)

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