

OHIO PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Bill Information

HB74 ENACT FY22-23 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make appropriations for programs related to transportation and public safety for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of those programs.

CURRENT STATUS

3/31/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. immediately

HB110 OPERATING BUDGET *(OELSLAGER S)*

To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.

CURRENT STATUS

6/22/2021 - , (Third Hearing)

HB140 MODIFY ELECTION NOTICES, BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR PROPERTY TAX LEVIES *(MERRIN D)*

To enact the "Ballot Uniformity and Transparency Act" to modify the form of election notices and ballot language for property tax levies.

CURRENT STATUS

4/28/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

HB141 MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS *(SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T)*

To make appropriations related to public transportation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance

HB146

REGARDS APPLYING PREVAILING WAGE LAW TO PUBLIC PROJECTS (RIEDEL C, MANCHESTER S)

To allow political subdivisions, special districts, and state institutions of higher education to elect to apply the Prevailing Wage Law to public improvement projects.

CURRENT STATUS

6/23/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (Second Hearing)

HB157

MODIFY MUNICIPAL INCOME TAX RULES - COVID WFH (JORDAN K, EDWARDS J)

To amend Section 29 of H.B. 197 of the 133rd General Assembly to modify municipal income tax employer withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees.

CURRENT STATUS

6/2/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

HB267

LIMIT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS (JORDAN K)

To limit the duration of public health orders and to allow the General Assembly to act via concurrent resolution in response to a public health emergency if the Governor or Department of Health does not.

CURRENT STATUS

5/4/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

HB275

EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B)

To expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services.

CURRENT STATUS

5/12/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)

HB283

EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B)

To expand the texting while driving prohibition to a general prohibition against using an electronic wireless communications device while driving, with certain exceptions, and to create data collection requirements based on associated violations of the distracted driving laws.

CURRENT STATUS

6/10/2021 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, House Criminal Justice, (Second Hearing)

HB350 PROHIBIT MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINE *(CUTRONA A)*

To prohibit mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations, requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination, and certain other actions relating to an individual's COVID-19 vaccination or health status and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

6/22/2021 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB4 EXEMPT EMS LINE OPERATORS-PUBLIC RECORDS *(ROEGNER K)*

To include emergency service telecommunicators, protective services workers, certain Ohio National Guard members, and certain mental health care providers as individuals whose residential and familial information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.

CURRENT STATUS

6/8/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. 9/7/21

SB15 FISCAL OFFICERS-LIABILITY *(WILSON S)*

To change the circumstances in which certain fiscal officers may be held liable for a loss of public funds.

CURRENT STATUS

3/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government

SB18 INTERNAL REVENUE CODE *(ROEGNER K, SCHAFFER T)*

To expressly incorporate changes in the Internal Revenue Code since March 27, 2020, into Ohio law, to exclude certain loan amounts forgiven under federal law from the commercial activity tax, to authorize a commercial activity tax exclusion for Bureau of Workers' Compensation dividends paid to employers, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

3/31/2021 - **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**; eff. immediately

SB32 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION *(RULLI M)*

To require the Director of Transportation to establish an electric vehicle charging station grant rebate program and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

2/17/2021 - Senate Transportation, (First Hearing)

SB56 INDEMNITY-DESIGN CONTRACTS *(BLESSING III L)*

To regulate the use of indemnity provisions in professional design contracts related to public improvements.

CURRENT STATUS

6/22/2021 - House Civil Justice, (First Hearing)

SB67 STUDY PROGRESS / CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS *(WILLIAMS S)*

To establish a committee to study the progress and challenges of African Americans in Ohio and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

3/16/2021 - Senate Finance, (First Hearing)

SB93 REQUIRE VOTE-COUNTY SALES TAX INCREASE *(ANTANI N)*

To require voter approval of any increase in the rate of a county sales tax.

CURRENT STATUS

3/3/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means

SB97 MUNICIPAL INCOME TAX-WORK FROM HOME *(ROEGNER K)*

To modify municipal income tax employer withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees

CURRENT STATUS

5/12/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing)

SB152 FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE TASK FORCE *(HOAGLAND F)*

To establish the Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Task Force in the office of the Attorney General and to make an appropriation.

CURRENT STATUS

4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance

SB169 PROHIBIT MANDATORY VACCINATIONS *(BRENNER A)*

To prohibit mandatory vaccinations against the coronavirus, to prohibit requiring proof of vaccinations generally, and to declare an emergency.

CURRENT STATUS

5/26/2021 - **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**, Senate Health, (First Hearing)

Week in Review

Week in Review for Friday, June 18, 2021

AGING

In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on Tuesday, June 15, the Ohio Department of Commerce Division of Securities asked Ohioans to keep a watchful eye on older adults for signs of financial exploitation and to report suspicions to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Adult Protective Services in the county where the adult resides. According to the department, abuse is rising with the aging of Ohio's population, due in part to the amount of wealth older generations have accumulated throughout their careers through pensions and investments. This makes them more likely targets for financial fraud and scams.

AGRICULTURE

The 2021 Vineyard Expansion Assistance Program (VEAP) is now open to new and existing Ohio vineyards, according to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg). VEAP allows wineries to invest in and plant high-quality, high-value grapes onsite instead of purchasing them from other states. The VEAP is an incentive program created and funded by the Ohio Grape Industries Committee (OGIC). All applications must be completed and received by the OGIC by Friday, July 16. To receive a copy of the application, contact Christy Eckstein at christy.eckstein@agri.ohio.gov.

As the state begins its first full fair and festival season since the enactment of 133-HB189 (Patterson-Blessing), the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) is highlighting new safety measures that have been implemented since "Tyler's Law" became effective. The law -- named for Tyler Jarrell, who died in 2017 after being thrown from a ride at the Ohio State Fair -- was signed by Gov. Mike DeWine in November 2019.

FY22-23 BUDGET

The same criticism senators leveled at the House's school funding plan about substantial cost increases in the out years applies to the Senate's rival formula, economist Howard Fleeter wrote in an analysis commissioned by school management groups. Fleeter reviewed the Senate plan unveiled recently in its version of HB110 (Oelslager) for the Ohio Education Policy Institute, work commissioned by the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO). Fleeter dings the Senate plan for not using the most up-to-date data on property values, resident income and teacher salaries for calculating the formula. "Property value data is currently available through 2020 and income data through 2019. It is not clear why the Senate's FY22-23 funding proposal did not update to 2018, 2019 and 2020 property values and 2017, 2018 and 2019 income data," he wrote. The Senate plan is also in the temporary law section of the budget.

The HB110 Conference Committee held a very brief organizational meeting on Tuesday at which time it was agreed they would work from the 3,307-page Senate version of the budget. Members of the committee include Reps. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton), chair; Phil Plummer (R-Dayton) and Erica Crawley (D-Columbus) and Sens. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls), Theresa Gavarone (R-Bowling Green) and Vern Sykes (D-Akron).

Telling the HB110 (Oelslager) Conference Committee that "the best-case scenario has been realized on almost all fronts," Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Kim Murnieks updated the agency's FY22-23 revenue forecasts by almost \$3 billion Thursday, but cautioned lawmakers that the forecast includes one-time resources and is affected by boosts to spending that will not last indefinitely.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

Lordstown Motors Corporation CEO Steve Burns and CFO Julio Rodriguez resigned effective Monday. It is the latest development amid questions about the future of the electric vehicle startup, following a June 8 regulatory filing in which Lordstown Motors said there was "substantial doubt" about its continuation as a going concern.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Thursday that refusal to contract with an agency for foster care because it declines to certify same-sex foster couples on religious grounds violates the First Amendment. The ruling, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, drew no dissents but an overlapping series of three concurring opinions. Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett joined Roberts' opinion. The case arose from a dispute between Catholic Social Services (CSS) and the city of Philadelphia, which stopped referring children to the agency after learning it wouldn't certify same-sex couples as foster parents.

CITIES

Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley, who is also a Democratic candidate for governor, was elected as the 79th president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) during a session of the conference's executive committee Friday. Whaley will succeed outgoing USCM President Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer.

The Mayors' Association of Ohio has announced Sidney Mayor Michael Barhorst will serve as the president of the association's executive committee in 2021. Village of Batavia Mayor John Thebout will serve as the first vice president of the executive committee, while Bellefontaine Mayor Ben Stahler will serve as the second vice president. St. Paris Mayor Brenda Cook will serve as secretary for the executive committee. The association said it will name a treasurer at a later date.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Gov. Mike DeWine announced that following President Joe Biden's signing federal legislation Thursday making Juneteenth -- June 19 -- a federal holiday, the state would also observe the holiday under the authority in the Ohio Revised Code which "defines state holidays as including 'any day appointed and recommended by the governor of this state or the president of the United States.'" Because June 19 falls on Saturday, state offices closed on Friday, June 18 to commemorate the day.

CORONAVIRUS

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Lottery announced Wednesday Suzanne Ward from Findlay in Hancock County won the fourth \$1 million prize in Ohio's Vax-a-Million drawing. Sean Horning from Cincinnati in Hamilton County won the fourth student full-ride scholarship including four years of tuition, books, and room and board at an Ohio public university or college.

Ohio's coronavirus-related state of emergency will be removed on Friday, June 18, Gov. Mike DeWine announced Thursday. "The state of emergency in Ohio -- as I explained when we went into the state of emergency -- has very limited meaning. In some states it means a lot of different things, but in Ohio, it has a very narrow meaning. One of the things, for example, is in regard to procurement -- in emergencies, you don't have to go through the normal process. And so it's time for that to end," DeWine said during a press conference with the latest Vax-a-Million winners. The governor issued an executive order declaring the COVID-19 state of emergency in early March 2020.

EDUCATION

For the first time in over a year, the State Board of Education (SBOE) held its monthly meeting in-person although it was also livestreamed. It approved a re-write of school operating standards on special education Tuesday after hearing but deferring action on a few changes from occupational and physical therapy organizations. The rules will next go to the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review. Also Tuesday, the board authorized the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to settle a lawsuit in the 10th District Court of Appeals over how the department calculated funding for Cleveland, Dayton and Toledo in FY05-07.

The House State and Local Government Committee Tuesday held the first hearings on two bills that would create new provisions for how certain "divisive concepts" are taught in schools and elsewhere. Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport) said his HB322 pertains only to K-12 education. Saying that classrooms are not "indoctrination centers," Jones explained his bill would prevent schools from teaching concepts such as "one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex"; and "an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex."

The other bill presented Tuesday was HB327 (Grendell-Fowler-Arthur), a more wide-ranging bill. Rep. Sarah Fowler Arthur, pertains to K-12 education, higher education, local government entities and state government entities. The provisions in the bill regarding education are essentially the same as those in Jones' bill, but HB327 also has language that would prohibit requiring teachings or training on "the concept that one race or sex is inherently superior or inferior to another race or sex" as a prerequisite for or to retain employment.

Gov. Mike DeWine announced Wednesday that the Ohio School Safety Center will award a total of \$10 million in grants to fund security enhancements at K-12 public schools and institutions of higher education in Ohio. "It's important that we work proactively to ensure that our school buildings and grounds are as safe as possible to protect both students and staff," said DeWine in a statement announcing the grants. "Two new grant programs offered through the Ohio School Safety Center will help schools and universities pinpoint any weaknesses in their physical security and make needed improvements and upgrades." The 2021 Campus Safety Grant Program began accepting applications on Wednesday and will award \$5 million to qualifying public colleges and universities for improvements to physical security on their campuses. The 2021 K-12 Safety Grant Program, administered by the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC), will award an additional \$5 million to qualifying public K-12 schools for similar school safety expenses.

ELECTIONS

Elections bill HB294 (Seitz-Ray) will actually expand voting access rather than clamp down on voting rights, Secretary of State Frank LaRose said at Thursday's meeting of the House Government Oversight Committee, although Democrats remained critical of the measure, raising issues of racial and economic disparities in voting access and long lines in the 2020 election.

ELECTIONS 2021

Former U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, who was the youngest mayor in Cleveland's history, announced this week he is running for his old position. The Plain Dealer reports that if Kucinich were to win in November, he would also be the oldest mayor in the city's history, taking the position at the age of 75.

ELECTIONS 2022

Though he has not officially announced whether he will run for the U.S. Senate in 2022, *Hillbilly Elegy* author J.D. Vance appeared at a campaign event with Republican gubernatorial candidate Jim Renacci this week in Newark.

Former President Donald Trump will hold a rally in Lorain County later this month, according to his Save America political action committee. The PAC said the rally will be held on Saturday, June 26, at 7 p.m. at the Lorain County Fairgrounds, 23000 Fairgrounds Road, in Wellington. Trump will stump for Republican Max Miller at the rally, who has announced a campaign to unseat U.S. Rep. Anthony Gonzalez (R-Canton) in 2022. Gonzalez was one of 10 U.S. House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump in January on charges of inciting the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

For the week ending June 12, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 15,866 initial traditional unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That total is slightly fewer than last week, when the department reported 16,224 jobless claims.

The Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council (UCMIC) discussed final items of its draft report Thursday and heard the latest update from Matt Damschroder, interim director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). Co-chair Rep. Matt Fraizer (R-Newark) said the council is continuing to work through the report due Aug. 11, and that they plan to adopt it in their scheduled Thursday, Aug. 5 meeting. They are also working to release a draft report by Thursday, July 1 so that members can provide input before a July 22 meeting.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

SB52's (Reineke-McColley) heavily revised controls over renewable energy in Ohio started their journey in the House Wednesday with some tough questions on the bill's true intent, the adequacy of current Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) practices versus expanded home rule, and the similarities and differences -- depending on one's point of view -- between solar and wind farms on the one hand and between renewables generally and natural gas infrastructure shielded from local control in HB201 (Stephens).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Freshman legislator Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-Loveland) told *Hannah News* there were several factors that prompted her to return to the Legislature: actions taken by former Gov. John Kasich and the Legislature to cut the Local Government Fund; the dearth of institutional knowledge in the House as a result of term limits; and the need for criminal justice reform.

The House voted 75-21 Wednesday to expel Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford), determining his actions in the scandal around 133-HB6 amounted to "disorderly conduct" warranting removal under constitutional procedures. A defiant Householder, predicting his acquittal on the federal bribery charges against him, argued the move was in fact unconstitutional and disrespectful to the voters who re-elected him knowing fully of his legal woes. But Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and other supporters of the expulsion resolution said Householder's conduct in developing and moving the controversial energy law was unethical and stained the reputation of the chamber. Though the final vote to expel passed by a margin beyond the two-thirds majority required, the procedural maneuver to bring up HR69 (Stewart-Fraizer) succeeded with no room for error, 66-31. The floor debate covered much of the same ground as the committee hearings on HR69. Supporters said even without a criminal conviction, the evidence in the federal case demonstrated Householder's abuse of his position. Opponents said the "disorderly conduct" standard for expulsion refers to violence and threats and argued a more expansive definition would set a bad precedent. Judging from lengthy comments he made outside the House chamber following his expulsion, Ohioans have likely not heard the last of Householder, though in the short term he said his plans were to return to his farm and help his wife plant vegetables -- corn, tomatoes, lettuce and cabbage. "I can tell you this much, fellow elected officials who didn't like public citizen Householder are really not going to like private citizen Householder," he said. House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) Thursday announced the application process for the open 72nd House District Seat formerly held Householder. According to Cupp, residents of the district who are interested in being considered for appointment to the seat should submit a cover letter and resume to HD72Appointment@ohiohouse.gov by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 23. Cupp said a screening committee will conduct interviews on Thursday, June 24.

Aside from the Householder expulsion vote, Wednesday's House session saw passage of HB138 (Baldrige), regarding emergency medical services; HB187 (Kelly-Lipps), regarding earnings and deductions statements for employees; HB238 (Hicks-Hudson-Crawley), designating July 28 as Buffalo Soldiers Day; HB281 (Jarrells-T. Young), updating statutory language on mental illness and disability; and SB49 (Hottinger-Sykes), regarding payment assurances for design professionals.

The Senate passed sports gambling legalization legislation SB176 (Antani-Manning) by a vote of 30-2 on Wednesday, sending the bill over to the House for its consideration. The chamber also passed three measure related to higher education: SB187 (Antani), allowing college athletes to benefit financially from their name, image and likeness; SB126 (Kunze-Gavarone), an anti-hazing measure; and SB135 (Cirino), which includes various higher education and workforce reforms, as well as campus free speech provisions. In addition, the chamber passed SB166 (Reineke), which addresses career-technical education and joint vocational school districts; SR41 (Yuko-Gavarone), which urges the governor of Michigan to keep Enbridge Line 5 operating; and HCR7 (John-Kick), which urges Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense to maintain the C-130 fleet.

Democrats on the House Government Oversight Committee walked out after a heated exchange on voting reform bill HB294 (Seitz-Ray) between House Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) and House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) spilled

over into other bills. The dust-up began while Seitz was questioning Secretary of State Frank LaRose regarding HB294, which Seitz is a sponsor of. Seitz commented that the 2020 election had the most voter participation in Ohio history, and he referenced his "colleague from Summit County" as incorrectly stating in a previous hearing that another election had more voter participation. Chairman Shane Wilkin (R-Hillsboro) had to recess the committee twice over outbursts during the hearing.

In other action, the House Civil Justice Committee reported out two resolutions -- HR57 (Click-Bird) and HCR18 (Schmidt) -- urging Congress to keep the U.S. Supreme Court at nine members; the House Health Committee reported out SB43 (Schaffer) designating July as "Sarcoma Awareness Month"; and HB193 (Cutrona-Pavliga) addressing electronic prescriptions; the House State and Local Government Committee reported out HB237 (Hillyer) which requires counties provide electronic means of recording instruments; the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee reported out HB31 (Wiggam) which deals with accessible parking; HB330 (Lepore-Hagan), a bridge naming bill; and SB12 (Brenner), a license plate bill; the House Ways and Means Committee reported out HB255 (Lipps) which deals with online publication of the second delinquent property tax list; the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee reported out HB201 (Stephens) which prevents local governments from limiting use of natural gas and propane; the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee reported out HB222 (Wilkin-Upchurch) which deals with nonprofit hospitals; and HCR5 (Hall) which urges Congress not to adopt HR1; the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee reported out HB244 (White-Lampton) which deals with military children; and SB166 (Reineke) which deals with vocational schools; Senate Judiciary Committee reported out SB25 (Gavarone), regarding drug testing; and the House Government Oversight Committee reported out SB80 (Gavarone-Cirino), regarding partisan designations for judicial candidates.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that it would provide more than \$34 million to the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and city of Columbus Center for Public Health to help address health disparities related to the pandemic. This funding is part of a total \$2.25 billion national investment in advancing health equity, the largest to date by the CDC.

Centene Corp. will pay \$88.3 million to settle allegations of pharmaceutical over-billing, Attorney General Dave Yost said Monday. The settlement comes just three months after Yost filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) claiming Centene used subcontractors to misrepresent pharmacy costs, inflate dispensing fees and file reimbursement requests for money already paid to others. Half or more of the settlement will go back to the federal government since the allegations involve shared Medicaid expenses.

Members of the House Health Committee including Chairman Scott Lipps (R-Franklin) debated opponents of HB248 (Gross) Tuesday who said the bill would "destroy the public health framework" of vaccination.

At the start of the committee, Lipps made a statement that the committee process requires all opinions to be heard, including ones "that make you angry, or cringe, or challenge you, and those that disagree with you." He said a witness at the committee's previous hearing caused controversy and he said opponents used that witness' controversial statements about "spike protein shedding" and vaccine interaction with 5G cell phone towers to discredit other proponents who testified, including individuals who were injured by vaccines and compensated in vaccine court.

Massachusetts Tuesday became the latest state to offer cash incentives for those who are vaccinated, with Gov. Charlie Baker saying in a tweet that "residents that have been fully vaccinated" would be eligible. This is different from Ohio's program -- the first of its kind -- which is open to those who have simply received a first dose of the two-stage Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) debuted a new design for its website Tuesday at www.medicaid.ohio.gov. Included in the redesign is a re-location of the page on ODM's rules to <https://medicaid.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/medicaid/stakeholders-and-partners/legal-and-contracts/legal-and-contracts>. The department is taking feedback on the new site at ODMWebsiteFeedback@medicaid.ohio.gov.

The House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee heard presentations from industry leaders during its Thursday hearing. Presenters included Dr. Quinton Moss, CEO and medical director for Modern Psychiatry and Wellness; Tracy Najera, executive director of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, and Joan Englund, executive director of the Mental Health and Addiction Advocacy Coalition; Matt Fisher and Rachel Hughes of Lighthouse Behavioral Health; and Don Cutcher of Buckeye Art Therapy Association.

The federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) survived its latest challenge in the U.S. Supreme Court, after justices ruled Thursday that a coalition of states and individuals asserting its unconstitutionality lacked standing to bring the case.

The DeWine administration is working on a plan now for how it will access and use about \$450 million available via the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act for home- and community-based services (HCBS), Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Director Maureen Corcoran said Thursday in testimony to the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC). ARP offers states the ability to earn an additional 10 percent in enhanced federal funding for specified Medicaid HCBS. The money can be drawn down from April of this year through March of next year, and must be spent by the end of March 2024. But requirements attached to the funding could have implications "for years to come," she said, noting "maintenance of eligibility requirements" separate from those tied to previous enhanced federal funding provided in response to the pandemic.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) -- led by secretary and former Ohio U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge -- announced that it had awarded the first tranche of local funding for Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) under the American Rescue

Plan (ARP). Public housing authorities in Ohio will receive \$17.9 million to cover costs for 1,522 vouchers and related administrative expenses for an initial 18-month period. The funding is part of \$1.1 billion that will support around 70,000 vouchers nationally through the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The ARP provided a total of \$5 billion for EHV, which are being allocated based on need and local capabilities.

JUDICIAL

The Ohio Supreme Court says guardians must now report pending felony and misdemeanor charges to their appointing probate court, effective June 1.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

The State Medical Board of Ohio (SMBO) officially approved the use of medical marijuana to treat Huntington's disease, terminal illness and spasticity. The vote to approve those new conditions under the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program (MMCP) was unanimous. The board also unanimously voted to reject petitions to add autism spectrum disorder, restless leg syndrome, panic disorder with agoraphobia (anxiety) and persistent muscle spasms.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ohio's 2021 spring wild turkey hunting season ended Sunday, May 30 with 14,541 birds taken, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. The top 10 counties for wild turkey harvest during the 2021 spring hunting season include the following: Columbiana (454),

Belmont (444), Meigs (437), Tuscarawas (417), Jefferson (408), Monroe (408), Ashtabula (401), Washington (398), Guernsey (378) and Muskingum (373).

The ODNR Division of Wildlife has instituted a disease surveillance area in three north-central counties following the discovery of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in two wild white-tailed deer harvested during the 2020-21 hunting season. The disease surveillance area includes Wyandot County as well as portions of Hardin and Marion counties, and includes the area within a 10-mile radius from both positive detections. This includes all 13 townships in Wyandot County; Jackson, Goshen and Dudley townships in Hardin County; and Grand, Grand Prairie, Salt Rock, Montgomery, Big Island and Marion townships in Marion County. The area will be mapped and posted at wildohio.gov.

Gov. Mike DeWine and ODNR Director Mary Mertz celebrated the state's second Inland Fish Ohio Day at Hook Lake this past weekend. The Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area contains more than 300 lakes and ponds teeming with bluegill, catfish and largemouth bass, according to ODNR.

The newly-renovated nature center at Cowan Lake State Park is open and ready to educate visitors this summer, according to ODNR. Highlights of the new exhibits, which were designed by Cincinnati-based Reverb Art & Design, include displays related to the wildlife found at Cowan Lake including the bald eagle and pollinators, as well as a wingspan mural.

Ohioans who take advantage of Saturday and Sunday's free fishing weekend will have access to a new resource on where fish are located, as the state unveiled a new data portal with information on stocking records by body of water, year, species of fish and stage of life. Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and Kendra Wecker, chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) Division of Wildlife, announced the database in a virtual press conference Thursday. It will include data going back to 1970, a time period over which the state has stocked around 1.5 billion fish in public waters.

PEOPLE

The Ohio Hospital Association (OHA) announced Friday that Dr. Stephen Markovich, president and CEO of OhioHealth, has been appointed to fill a vacant seat on its Board of Trustees effective Thursday, July 1 for a term ending Dec. 31, 2023.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Denison University in Licking County has joined institutions of higher learning certified under statewide law enforcement standards promulgated by the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board and administered by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS).

Out with the old and in with the new, says Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) Executive Director Dwight "Dee" Holcomb, who Monday announced the rollout of the OPOTA Online portal to replace the former eOPOTA. The updated OPOTA Online includes courses on the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI): Lethal Use of Force and Officer-Involved Shooting (OIS) Investigations, Use of Deadly Force and Legal Guidelines, Ohio School Threat Assessments, Human Trafficking, Crisis Intervention, Child Abuse and Neglect, Trauma in the Brain, Companion Animal Encounters, Preserving Cell Phone Evidence, and more.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Controlling Board approved all 209 items on its agenda Monday, including one late addition and three that were held by members for questions. It also heard a presentation from the Ohio Treasurer of State's Office on the latest collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the treasurer's office and the Ohio Civil Service Employees' Association (OCSEA) without questions. The board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 12. Board President W. Fletch Zimpher said that members can plan to attend in person but Ohio Channel streaming is expected to continue as well.

TECHNOLOGY/AEROSPACE

The Ohio Aerospace and Aviation Technology Committee (OAATC) may be in a holding pattern without a chair, but Rep. Adam Holmes (R-Nashport) told *Hannah News* he is seeking removal of a requirement that the position rotate between the House and Senate at the start of a new general assembly so he can return to that role.

Ohio Department of Commerce (DOC) Director Sheryl Maxfield and other agency leaders appeared before the House Technology and Innovation Committee Wednesday to discuss efforts to improve department IT systems -- particularly in regard to liquor and real estate licensing -- and effects of the pandemic.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) said recently that it will use \$35 million in federal stimulus funding to complete dozens of projects aimed at stopping landslides and rockslides in parts of Eastern and Southern Ohio. The agency noted that in many cases, the repairs can be very costly and can take months to complete.

UTILITIES

The state's system of charging customers for utilities' current capital debt load allows electric, gas and water companies to exploit the much higher return on investment (ROI) from their most recent rate case -- often a decade or more in the past -- at the expense of consumers, critics say. Utilities counter that allowing the Public Utilities of Ohio (PUCO) to adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach to lowering customer charges based on falling interest rates does not account for individual companies' differing investment risks and other costs considered in a rate case. The utility industry and stakeholders including the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) and Industrial Energy Users (IEU) Ohio, among others, met PUCO's Wednesday deadline for public comment in advance of its "Cost of Capital Forum" scheduled for Tuesday, June 22. The commission announced the forum after OCC and NOPEC voiced sharp criticism of PUCO's current practice of setting ROI for utility "rider" cases and other proceedings.

The state's three electric utilities with a stake in the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) appeared before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee Tuesday to push back on the proposed repeal of state-mandated subsidies supporting OVEC's wholesale price. American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio, AES Ohio and Duke Energy Ohio generally described the legacy generation rider (LGR) on all Ohio electric bills as a "hedge" against deregulated energy. Duke went further to accuse SB117 (Romanchuk-Craig) supporters of an unconstitutional foray into retroactive laws, retroactive utility refunds, and an override of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) "legislative" authority. AEP's vice president of regulatory and finance, Marc Reitter; AES's director of risk management, Dave Crusey; and Duke President Amy Spiller joined OVEC's vice president, chief operating officer and chief financial officer, Justin Cooper, in joint testimony to the committee.

"The commission does not have the discretion to make rates and charges subject to refund," members of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) declared Wednesday. It does not, that is, except for at least four instances when commissioners actually do have that authority, including PUCO orders allowing utility refunds to be preserved on appeal to the Supreme Court of Ohio. Commissioners concluded as much in a 4-0 ruling on AES Ohio's (formerly DP&L) legacy "rate stabilization charge" (RSC) dating to its first electric security plan (ESP) in 2009 under energy omnibus 127-SB221.

WORKFORCE

JobsOhio leaders highlighted recent successes and the status of marketing efforts during Friday's Board of Directors meeting, while also noting that the economic development nonprofit will hold a stewardship and listening tour around the state this summer as part of its 10th anniversary this year. Board Chairman Bob Smith noted that several board members attended the hybrid meeting in person along with the

executive team and said Ohio is seeing "significant progress" with vaccine efforts. That has helped drive the unemployment rate to nearly pre-pandemic levels, he added. "2021 will be memorable for all the right reasons."