



2025 Summer General Assembly School Districts & Colleges/Universities Caucus Notes Friday, August 8, 2025

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions – The School District & Colleges/Universities Caucus met on Friday, August 8, 2025, at 8:45 a.m. in Heritage Hall Room 153 at the Owens Community College Toledo area campus in Perrysburg, Ohio. Dr. Dione Somerville, president of Owens Community College and the caucus moderator, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. Introductions were made around the room.

Caucus members in attendance included:

Ed Ewers, Superintendent, Penta Career Center
Jason Kozina, Superintendent, Northwood Local Schools
Dr. Dione Somerville (Moderator), President, Owens Community College

Other guests in attendance included:

Sofia Gilmore-Monten, Administration Assistant, Fishbeck
Erika White, State Representative of the 41st District, Ohio House of Representatives
Gary Click, State Representative of the 88th District, Ohio House of Representatives

TMACOG staff in attendance included:

Melissa Hopfer, Water Quality Program Manager
Tiara Davis, Water Quality Planner
Jim Kirtland, Finance Manager

Caucus Overview – Dr. Somerville gave an overview of the caucus.

Discussion of Topics/Issues – Caucus members discussed the following topics:

Topic 1 – State Biennium Budget and Property Tax Changes

- The discussion began by Dr. Somerville detailing the highly iterative and evolving budget cycle that recently concluded. Property taxes were a subject of conversation for the caucus, as schools represent a significant portion of what property taxes fund. Due to the current housing crisis and the resulting exponential growth of property values, property owners are paying more in taxes and are placing a critical eye on school funding. Despite property values increasing, funding for schools has been increasingly going towards scholarships and vouchers for charter schools instead of public schools. Concerns were raised that there is a growing gap between the neediest students and the resources for them to succeed. As discussed by caucus members, community issues are often lumped into education as kids whose needs are not met may struggle in school.
- With these concerns in mind, the caucus discussed how educators can be part of the solution. Questions were raised such as what legislators and the public want to see from school districts. Clearly defined goals would be helpful to educational institutions. How can school districts and legislators collaborate to develop pathways for their students? Answers to these questions are multi-faceted and will require further collaboration and advocacy.

What legislative action might be helpful? – Dr. Somerville welcomed Reps. Erika White and Gary Click and provided a summary of the conversation thus far. She also asked for input on how best to engage legislators regarding expectations and concerns of the school district. Reps. Click and White responded that all parties need to maintain open lines of communication. They discussed the importance of building relationships with legislators and inviting them onsite to see not only successes but also challenges. Rep. White emphasized the importance of grassroots advocacy and local communities coming together with a unified voice.

Caucus members suggested convening a group of legislators and educators that could develop a collaborative framework for addressing concerns related to education and funding.

Questions for State Lawmakers Panel Discussion – The caucus chose a potential question for the legislative panel discussion:

1. Understanding that traditional ways of advocacy are open to us (such as visits, phone calls, testimony, etc.), what are some methods in which the education community can engage with public officials to further the state agenda and mitigate downstream negative impact?

New Business/Next Steps– There was no other business or next steps discussed.

Adjourn – Dr. Somerville thanked everyone for attending the caucus and the session was adjourned.