



GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP, INC.

17 SOUTH HIGH STREET - SUITE 245

COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3413

PHONE: 614-461-9335

FAX: 614-461-9336

**Ohio Speech & Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition
Legislative Activities Report
April 2019**

The State Operating budget (HB 166) was introduced on March 25, 2019. HB 166 serves as an overview of the DeWine Administration's plan for the two-year state operating budget. The summary indicates that most state agencies will receive slight increases in funding. The massive spending proposal will be the most substantial bill legislators address during the 133rd General Assembly, as it funds state government for the next two years and touches nearly every facet of state government. The initial budget proposal increases spending in programs dealing with children, workforce development, addiction recovery and natural resources without raising taxes. The House and Senate will spend the next three months debating the measure. The Ohio Constitution requires the budget bill to be passed and signed by the governor by June 30th.

HB 166 includes several provisions of interest to OSHGAC:

- Appropriates "up to" \$200,000 in each year for the Ohio Hearing Aid Assistance Program;
- Requires insurance plans to cover services delivered by telemedicine if they would have covered the services in an in-person setting;
- Makes the Employment First Task Force, organized by the Ohio Dept. of DD, a mandatory program;
- Allows Medicaid to suspend a Medicaid provider number without notice if there is evidence that the provider is a threat of serious harm to the health and safety of Medicaid recipients; and
- Funds Community Centers for the Deaf at \$27,580 in each year of the biennium.

Separate from the budget bill, HB 129 was recently introduced in an effort to allow motorcyclists to wear ear phones for hearing protection in both ears. You may recall that this provision was originally included in HB 62, the transportation budget bill. It was removed from that bill and the sponsor, Rep. Riordan McClain, has decided to pursue the bill independently. OSHGAC is scheduled to meet with Rep. McClain in late April to discuss how to improve the bill by allowing for the appropriate type of hearing protection for motorcyclists.

Another piece of legislation that OSHGAC will be actively involved in is the hearing aid mandate legislation. Representative Weinstein and Representative Russo plan to co-sponsor this legislation which would require commercial insurance plans to cover hearing aids up to \$1800/ear for children up to age 18. The bill has not been introduced yet but OSHGAC was asked to provide comments on the draft. In our comments, we recommended that the bill define the level of hearing loss that triggers the mandatory coverage. We also recommended that the bill include the type of testing required to determine the level of hearing loss. Our recommendations were aimed at ensuring that health plans cannot obfuscate the intent of the legislation by only covering the most extremely hearing losses. The sponsors seem inclined to make OSHGAC's recommended changes.

The House appointed Haraz Ghanbari (R-Perrysburg) to the seat formerly held by Sen. Theresa Gavarone (R-Bowling Green). Gavarone was appointed to the Senate when Randy Gardner left to be chancellor of the Department of Higher Education. Mr. Ghanbari is a public affairs officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, serving as a lieutenant commander, and has also served in the Army National Guard. He was a member of Perrysburg City Council and the director of military and veteran affairs at the University of Toledo.

A total of 11 applicants have submitted resumes to replace Brian Hill who was selected over his other House Collogues last December to fill the seat left open with Troy Balderson's departure for Congress. Rep. Ron Hood and Rep. Tim Schaffer are among the applicants currently in the legislature. The remaining applicants are Jeff LaRe, executive VP, The Whetstone Group; Kyle Miller, student, Capital University; Jeanette Moll, attorney at law, Jeanette M. Moll LLC.; Brian Stewart, Pickaway County commissioner Melissa Bell, director of membership outreach for the Ohio Pork Council; Leif Bickel, deputy sheriff with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office; Charles Blake, retired military, Special Forces; Christian Neff, IT project manager with JP Morgan Chase; Carl Raines, VP of the Morgan Local School Board and executive director of the Morgan County Improvement Corporation. Hill's resignation from the Senate is set for the first week of April.

Below is a list of legislation we are currently tracking during the 133rd Ohio General Assembly:

HB115 **REGULATOR RESTRICTION REDUCTION (RIEDEL C, ROEMER B)** To require certain agencies to reduce the number of regulator restrictions and to amend the versions of sections 106.021 and 106.03 of the Revised Code that are scheduled to take effect August 18, 2019, to continue the provision of this act on and after that effective date.

Current Status: 4/10/2019 - House State and Local Government, (Second Hearing)

HB129 **MOTORCYCLE-HEARING PROTECTION (MCCLAIN R)** To permit a person to wear earphones or earplugs for hearing protection while operating a motorcycle.

Current Status: 3/26/2019 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)

HB133 **MILITARY-TEMPORARY LICENSURE** (PERALES R, WEINSTEIN C) To require state occupational licensing agencies, under certain circumstances, to issue temporary licenses or certificates to members of the military and spouses who are licensed in another jurisdiction and have moved to Ohio for active duty.

Current Status: 4/3/2019 - House State and Local Government, (First Hearing)

HB166 **OPERATING BUDGET** (OELSLAGER S) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2019, and ending June 30, 2021, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.

Current Status: 4/11/2019 - House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, (Ninth Hearing)

SB1 **REDUCE REGULATORY RESTRICTIONS** (MCCOLLEY R, ROEGNER K) To require certain agencies to reduce the number of regulatory restrictions and to continue the provision of this act on and after August 18, 2019.

Current Status: 3/5/2019 - Senate Government Oversight and Reform, (Third Hearing)

SB7 **TEMP STATE OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES-MILITARY** (LEHNER P, HACKETT R) Regarding temporary state occupational licenses for members of the military and their spouses.

Current Status: 4/2/2019 - Referred to Committee House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs

SB14 **DRUG PRICE INFORMATION DISCLOSURE** (MAHARATH T) Regarding pharmacy benefit managers, pharmacists, and the disclosure to patients of drug price information.

Current Status: 4/3/2019 - Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions, (First Hearing)

SB25 **MEDICAID WORK, EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS** (HUFFMAN M) Regarding work and education requirements for the Medicaid program.

Current Status: 3/20/2019 - Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid, (Second Hearing)

SB29 **MEDICAID COPAYMENTS (DOLAN M)** Regarding Medicaid copayment requirements.

Current Status: 2/19/2019 - Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid,
(Second Hearing)

SB60 **ESTABLISH WAIVER-MEDICAID EXPANSION (BURKE D)** To establish a waiver component for the Medicaid expansion eligibility group and to abolish the Healthy Ohio Program.

Current Status: 3/6/2019 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance