

*Co-Chair*  
*Vernon Sykes, Representative*  
*34<sup>th</sup> House District*



*Co-Chair*  
*William G. Batchelder, Speaker*  
*69<sup>th</sup> House District*

**OHIO CONSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION COMMISSION**

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**EDUCATION, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, & MISCELLANEOUS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**  
**CHAD A. READLER, CHAIR**  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2013**

Chairman Readler called meeting of the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Subcommittee on Education, Public Institutions, and Miscellaneous & Local Government to order at 9:15 a.m. and asked the clerk to call the roll. A quorum was present.

Chairman Readler called on Mr. Malcolm Costa, President and CEO at Akron Summit Community Action, Inc., and Ms. Allyson Lee, Head Start Director at Akron Summit Community Action Inc. to provide presentation on Head Start and its role in early childhood education.

Vice Chair Gilbert asked Mr. Costa whether Head Start has turned away children due to a lack of funding. Mr. Costa remarked that the Federal Sequestration did affect monies but no child was turned away. Vice Chair Gilbert asked why an amendment to the Constitution is necessary if Head Start is working well. Mr. Costa answered that attendance and retention is a problem that could be addressed.

Chairman Readler asked the ages of children in Head Start. Ms. Lee responded that the ages of children in Head Start are between birth and 5 years old.

Representative Clyde asked for the presenters to provide the Committee with a snapshot of the kind of family that enrolls a child in Head Start and what level of income does the average Head Start family take-in. Ms. Lee answered that enrollment eligibility is based on the age(s) of the child(ren) and household income; remarking that most families are at or below the Federal Poverty Line. Representative Clyde inquired whether the Head Start in Akron has a lengthy waitlist or is there a high demand versus accessibility. Ms. Lee shared that the waitlist for the Akron Head Start is short this is due to the varied childcare options available to families that may not qualify for Head Start.

Governor Taft asked whether there is data that reveals how the graduates of Head Start are performing with regards to kindergarten readiness. Ms. Lee shared that they are at the beginning stages of tracking Head Start graduates and is willing to provide the Committee with data at a future Committee meeting. Mr. Costa remarked that a Constitutional amendment that ensures funded sustainability for early childhood education would be a celebrated action.

Representative Sykes thanked Mr. Costa and Ms. Lee for their presentations and willingness to educate members of the Committee on the value of Head Start programming.

Chairman Readler called upon Mr. William Sims, President and CEO of Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools to provide presentation to the Committee.

Vice Chair Gilbert asked Mr. Sims to expound on the definition of special education. Mr. Sims replied special education is a term regarded to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Chairman Readler asked whether there are specific charter schools that provide services to special ed. students; Mr. Sims replied yes.

Governor Taft asked Mr. Sims whether the Alliance has amendment language that will modernize the Constitution with regards to charter schools; Mr. Sims replied that language can be devised.

Chairman Readler asked Mr. Sims to discuss the evolution of schools with regards to STEM and its role within charters. Mr. Sims asserted the biggest challenges are how to adapt to changing circumstances, compete globally and address the need for individualized programming. Chairman Readler noted that charters receive fewer monies than public schools and asked Mr. Sims to share opinion. Mr. Sims asserted the issue must be a charge for policy makers.

Representative Sykes noted that as policy makers, the General Assembly must grapple with issues of adequacy and availability of monies. In response, Mr. Sims asserted the challenge in addressing adequacy and funding are too heavily relied upon local property taxes and noted the challenge ahead for policy makers is to use state funds that can also combat funding disparity. Representative Sykes questioned how much state participation is appropriate with regards to charters.

Chairman Readler called upon Mr. William Phillis, Executive Director of the Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding and Mr. Nicholas Pittner, from Bricker & Eckler to provide background on common schools and funding.

Mr. Pittner noted that he was the lead attorney for the plaintiffs in the DeRolph school funding case and shared background of the case. Mr. Pittner concluded that the Ohio education system remains inadequate as the funding issue has not been addressed and the over reliance on local property taxes leaves a disparity.

Vice Chair Gilbert asked whether the presenters could provide a thumbnail of funding alternatives. Mr. Phillis affirmed the connection between opportunity and funding must be examined and depart from the dependence on local property taxes; a worthwhile alternative is to increase state support from the current 43% to 65% and endow state with accountability of funding.

Chairman Readler questioned the definition of thorough and efficient within today's education system. Mr. Phillis asserted the 19<sup>th</sup> century definition of a thorough and effective system was searching for equity and adequacy within the systems.

Representative Sykes added that an established standard or mechanism by which difficult decisions must be made would lessen the reliance on the legislative branch.

Commissioner Brooks asserted having a first-hand understanding of the inadequacies within our education system on the local level affirms the need to make strong recommendations to the General Assembly to tackle the issues of educational disparity within the state.

Noting the expiration of time, Chairman Readler thanked Mr. Pittner and Sims for their presentation and insight. With no further business, Chairman Readler moved to adjourn, Representative Sykes seconded, and the Committee adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

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Chad Readler, Chair

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Edward Gilbert, Vice Chair