

A Legislative Update from Representative Richard D. Brown

February 2022



Dear Neighbor,

I hope this finds you and your family safe and healthy. The month of February was a busy time at the Statehouse. The Ohio Redistricting Commission continues its work in drawing new Congressional and state legislative districts. Recent submissions, including four state legislative maps and one Congressional map, passed by the Republican members of the Commission have been struck down by the Ohio Supreme Court for violating the Ohio Constitution. Ohio voters overwhelmingly supported fair maps in 2015 and 2018, and I hope to see the majority party come to the table and work with our caucus to pass a bipartisan, fair map.

Enclosed you will find a resource card with contact information for my office, as well as for state and local resources. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office to share your thoughts on state issues or if I can be of any assistance. I'm proud to serve you and our community in the Ohio House and will continue fighting for you and your family every day.

Sincerely,

Richard Brown
State Representative
Ohio House District 20

New Committee Assignments

With the change in leadership in the Ohio House, some representatives were assigned to new committees. Below is an updated list of Representative Brown's committee assignments:

- Government Oversight, *Ranking Member*
- Rules and Reference
- Civil Justice
- Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs
- Joint Legislative Ethics Commission
- OneOhio Recovery Foundation Board

\$1.3 mil for Rickenbacker

This month, Representative Brown announced \$1.3 million in funding to support additional payroll costs, utility costs, and federal repayments incurred at Air National Guard Wings at Rickenbacker (located in House District 20), Toledo, Mansfield, and Springfield.

"The funds released today will help keep Rickenbacker running smoothly, and it will save jobs," said Rep. Brown. "I appreciate the continued support of the National Guard, the airport, and firefighters, as well as investment into our House District 20 community."

The \$1.3 million approved today will help maintain current operational levels at the Air National Guard Wings, including military and civilian commercial flight operations at three of the facilities. This funding will affect more than 140 state firefighters and employees, preventing staff reductions at the Wings.

Black History Month

February is Black History Month, a time to celebrate and honor the contributions, achievement, and recognize the history of Black Americans. Black history is Ohio and American history. The theme of this year's Black History Month is Black Health and Wellness, which is an opportunity to reduce racial health disparities, equitably expand economic opportunity, and take on systemic racism in our society.

"Understanding our nation's history is necessary to address the challenges and injustices we see today. I'm committed to listening to Black voices, understanding Black experiences, and ensuring that the policies we consider at the Statehouse are inclusive, providing every Ohioan the opportunity to thrive right here at home," said Representative Brown.

COSI's Learning Lunchboxes

Representative Brown was proud to drop off COSI's Learning Lunchboxes at Winchester Trail Elementary School. This program provides students with an opportunity to cultivate their STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) skills. Funding for the program comes from House Bill 169, which Rep. Brown voted to pass in December 2021.

In speaking to the students, Rep. Brown said, "STEAM is everywhere and everybody can be a part of it. Our state and our country need more people, just like you, to become scientists, programmers, engineers, artists, or invent new technology to help people and solve the problems of the future."



Above: Rep. Brown and Winchester Trail Elementary School Principal Max Lallathin with COSI's Learning Lunchboxes

\$175 mil in COVID-19 funding

Representative Brown announced \$150 million in funds to increase testing services and the availability of at-home rapid tests across the state. \$7.2 million in COVID-19 relief funds was also announced to address the educator shortage and students' chronic absences as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, \$17 million was approved to aid with pandemic response efforts and to reduce COVID-19 health disparities.

"This funding will greatly help our efforts to provide COVID-19 testing in Ohio and support our students, teachers, and schools as they continue to navigate this pandemic," said Rep. Brown. **"I'm also glad to see additional funding for the State Opioid Response Grant Program as we continue to tackle the state's opioid epidemic."**

The State Opioid Response Program is a part of the state's ongoing efforts to end the opioid epidemic. Representative Brown has sponsored House Bill 328, which would establish the Office of Drug Policy as a cabinet-level position in the Governor's Office. House Bill 328 would help communities across Ohio provide resources to fight against the opioid epidemic and to aid Ohioans struggling with addiction.

Sponsor Testimony on HB448

Representative Brown gave his sponsor testimony on House Bill 448, which requires prescription drug readers to be provided for visually impaired or blind Ohioans. This device is attached to a prescription container and audibly conveys the information printed on the container. This will prevent taking the wrong pill, missing a re-fill date, or ingesting an expired medication, all of which can be harmful or deadly.

Ohioans with visual impairments now have to utilize unreliable methods to differentiate which pill bottles contain their prescriptions, like tying objects to bottles or leaving different prescription bottles in different places around their home to tell them apart, all of which are not ideal.

"Increasing access to audible prescription readers will greatly benefit those who are blind or have visual impairments and will save lives," said Rep. Brown.

