



NEWS RELEASE

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Union asks legislature to slow down bill that could eliminate state agencies, create government gridlock

Westerville – The largest state employees union and numerous stakeholders today are warning Ohioans that Senate Bill 329 could potentially do away with entire state agencies overnight, disrupting the lives of millions of Ohioans who depend on government services.

A substitute Senate Bill 329 was introduced yesterday, rushed through the Senate Government Oversight Committee today and is expected to hit the Senate floor this afternoon. An original bill was introduced in May of this year, but gained no traction. The substitute bill expands a legislative review process to include most state agencies, not just boards and commissions, as is the current practice.

The language has the potential for “sunsetting” or abolishing entire state agencies if they are found to not be “useful” or “effective” by a legislative review committee. Currently, only state boards and commissions are reviewed every four years under the state’s sunset provision. SB 329 would require that most executive branch state agencies be reviewed every two years.

Ohio Civil Service Employees Association President Chris Mabe wrote a letter pleading with the committee chair to allow more time for input and for additional hearing days. That request was denied and the bill passed quickly out of committee this morning.

Not only could the language potentially eliminate state agencies, it also requires that a bill be passed to keep in existence state agencies under review.

“This process has the potential for holding the state government hostage, just like what happens with the federal government,” said Mabe. “It’s already difficult enough to get a state budget passed every two years. We even have a lengthy mid-biennium budget review process now. This would be like the state budget process on steroids,” said Mabe.

Besides creating government gridlock, the bill could interrupt the lives of millions of Ohioans who go to school, receive nursing home or long-term care, receive unemployment compensation, depend on safe communities and safe roadways. It also could put Ohio at risk of losing federal funding and leave the state exposed to potential lawsuits by stakeholders.

“With such a major proposal to potentially restructure or even eliminate entire government systems, you would think the legislature would want all stakeholders at the table. All we’re asking for is a process that’s transparent and inclusive, not one that shuts out the voices of Ohioans and is done behind closed doors,” Mabe said.

OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state and local government employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).