



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Dear Neighbor,

This has been a busy couple of weeks in the Ohio Legislature. Just this last week, my Democratic colleagues and **I voted "NO"** on the state operating budget (HB 96) as it arbitrarily and recklessly slashes critical state funding areas while failing to benefit everyday Ohioans.

In this most recent addition of the newsletter we will take a look the recent changes to Democratic Leadership, an in-depth look at provisions of the budget, what the Ohio Jewish Caucus has been up to, an update on my legislation, as well as what's been going on in our communities.

I hope you have a happy and safe July 4th. While we enjoy time with family and friends let's not forget why we celebrate, the bold pursuit of liberty, justice, and equality that sparked our nation's founding, and the ongoing work we all share to make those ideals real for everyone.

If there is anything my office can do please reach out to us by email at Rep21@ohiohouse.gov or by phone at (614) 644-5079.

Sincerely,

Eric Synenberg

Eric Synenberg
State Representative, District 21



OFFICE UPDATES

Please be advised that the House of Representatives' hours of operation are changing effective July 1, 2025 through August 31, 2025. Beginning July 1 please note the following changes:

- The House will be closed in observance of the holiday from Wednesday, July 2 to Friday, July 4;
- Every Friday in July (4, 11, 18, & 25) the House of Representatives will be closed;
- Every Friday in August (1, 8, 15, 22, & 29) the House of Representatives will close at 12PM.

Any calls or emails our office receives during this time will be returned or answered in the order in which they are received upon return of office staff.

Democratic Leadership Changes



Left to Right: Minority Whip, Beryl Brown Piccolantonio
Assistant Minority Leader, Phil Robinson
Minority Leader, Dani Isaacsohn
Assistant Minority Whip, Desiree Tims

We've elected new Democratic leadership. I'm grateful to those our previous team, and proud to stand with our new leaders as they continue to guide our caucus forward with integrity and purpose.



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EVERY DOLLAR IS A CHOICE: THE OPERATING BUDGET

Last week, **I, along with all Democratic members of the House and Senate, voted "NO" on House Bill 96**, the Republican-crafted state operating budget, because it includes harmful cuts and fails to make meaningful investments in children, public education, healthcare, and essential services. Thousands of Ohioans reached out through calls, emails, and letters, urging lawmakers to invest in our communities and support working families. Despite that, Republican leaders prioritized a flat tax, reduced support for public schools, and allocated funding for a new Browns stadium. Here is a closer look at some of the most damaging provisions included in this budget. A * indicates that the provision was vetoed or partially vetoed by Governor DeWine.

EDUCATION



School Funding: The State of Ohio is constitutionally required to properly fund our public schools, with the state covering 50 percent and local governments covering the other half. Right now, the state is only contributing 35 percent. This is not just falling short; it is failing our students.

This funding gap forces local governments to make up the difference, putting pressure on communities and threatening teacher pay, classroom resources, and the quality of education across the state. Ohio must meet its obligation because our students deserve more than broken promises.



Eliminates Elected State Board of Education Membership: abolishes the 11 elected members to a total of 5 members all appointed by the Governor.



Reduces the number of contributing members on the STRS board from 5 to 2 and retired teachers from 2 to 1. Adds the Chancellor of Higher Education (or designee), one Treasurer of State's investment designee, one investment expert member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and one investment expert member appointed by the President of the Senate.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



Decreases Drug Overdose Funding: reduces funding by \$6M/FY.



Cuts over \$1.2 billion in funding to Medicaid Services that is primarily used for reimbursement for health care providers that cover Medicaid recipients services.



Prohibits the distribution of Medicaid funds to provide mental health services to transgender adults.



To the extent permitted by federal law, prohibits Department of Medicaid from paying for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, but exempting intellectual and developmental disability services.



Requires ODH to develop a public electronic dashboard to publish on a monthly basis abortion data that includes specified information.

DEVELOPMENT



Requires all individuals under 21 to complete full driver's education and 50 hours of practice to get a license.

EVERY DOLLAR IS A CHOICE: THE OPERATING BUDGET

TAXES & FUNDS



Implements a flat income tax so that everyone pays the same rate, regardless of how much they earn. This change will cost the state \$1.67 billion over the next two years and shift the tax burden onto working-class families, while giving the largest break to the wealthiest Ohioans.



*Repeals newspapers and other everyday products from sales tax exemptions.



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Requires state taking of unclaimed funds belonging to Ohioans and redirecting to qualifying sports and culture projects. Revises the Modell Law (also known as the Sports Team Relocation Law) to allow a team to simply give written notice prior to a move rather than enter into an agreement with the local entity.



Repeals the public library funding as a portion of GRF share that has been in place for decades and replaces it with a direct appropriation. Then requires transfers from within that appropriation to other programs. Both of these changes reduce what local libraries will receive in state support by more than \$75 million.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Changes to the Governor's Merit Scholarship: Starting with the student cohort beginning college in the 2026-2027 academic school year, only students in the top 2% of their graduating class will be eligible for the scholarship. Previously it was the top 5%.



Cuts funding for Campus Sexual Violence Safety and Training from \$1.3 million to \$400,000.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



*Decreases Funding for H2Ohio program from \$250 million to \$165 million. Cuts funding to Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, and Environmental Protection Agency. Decreases prohibit H2Ohio funds from being used to purchase land or conservation easements, which functionally cripples DNR's wetlands programming, one of the most permanent water quality solutions in the program.



Eliminates Department of Natural Resources Healthy Lake Erie Program and phases out appropriations by 50%.

WHAT NOW?

On June 30, Governor DeWine signed into law House Bill 96, with 67 vetoed items. He had the option to approve the budget in full, veto specific provisions, or allow it to become law without his signature. House Democrats submitted a formal letter urging the Governor to veto the entire bill, or, at the very least, veto its most harmful provisions. The legislature does have the ability to override any of his vetoes at any time during this General Assembly. I want to say thank you to everyone who contacted our office to share your concerns. Your voices matter, and we will continue to fight for policy that puts Ohioans first.

Ohio Jewish Caucus

I recently had the privilege to receive a sneak peak preview of the Tree of Life Exhibit at the Maltz Museum, which runs through August. That same day Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Luschinsky, Israel Embassy Aides, were murdered through an act of hate and antisemitism.



The next day, the Ohio Jewish Caucus hosted a Townhall event in Akron where we came together with members of the community, remembered Sarah and Yaron, gave updates from the legislature, and heard Ohioans voice their thoughts and questions.



With the recent developments in the Middle East involving Iran and its continued threats toward Israel, I am and will always be deeply committed to Israel's right to defend itself against those who seek to do it harm. I will continue to use my voice at the Statehouse to advocate for Israel and to protect our Jewish communities here at home.



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Legislation Update

As we look back to June, I am proud to say my Democratic colleagues and I introduced a package of pro-LGBTQ+ policy that would make Ohio a welcoming place for everyone, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.



Representative Anita Somani (D-Dublin) and myself introduced **HJR 4, the Marriage Equality Act**, that if passed through the House and Senate would place a constitutional amendment on the November 2026 ballot allowing voters to overturn the current constitutional language stating Ohio only recognizes marriage between one man and one woman. As this is a joint resolution, the **legislation must receive 3/5 majority vote in each chamber to pass, that is at least 60 votes in the House and 20 votes in the Senate**. The legislation is currently pending a first hearing in the House Judiciary Committee.

Out and About



I commemorated both the City of University Heights and Beachwood for their fantastic Juneteenth celebrations.



I attended Cleveland Pride Parade and Festival.



We celebrated Rev. Dr. Chelton Flanagan for his 20th pastoral anniversary and work as a community leader.



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