



Representative C. Allison Russo
State Representative
The Ohio House of Representatives

June 27, 2025

Governor Mike DeWine
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

On behalf of the of Ohioans I represent in House District 7, I write to you because I believe House Bill 96, the biennial state operating budget, warrants consideration of a full veto. If not, I urge you to line-item veto several harmful provisions added to this budget. The architects of the budget choose to prioritize countless provisions that do not represent the values and best interest of Ohio's working families, senior citizens, and children. Despite the constant cry of constituents, this budget chooses gimmicks instead of targeted, need-based, state-funded property tax relief. Instead of funding our public schools or helping parents afford childcare or healthcare or pay for groceries, diapers, rent, and any other costs, this budget prioritizes tax cuts for the wealthiest few and Medicaid cuts for babies and the elderly.

During your State of the State address in March, you said every day your office works to, "help ensure that every Ohioan has the tools to live up to their full potential and the opportunity to live their version of the American dream." That's a dream that I too share, but that cannot be accomplished by some of the provisions that have made their way into this budget.

Our state has the resources to improve the lives of citizens and to allow each individual Ohioan to achieve their fullest potential. If we really want to make Ohio the best place to live, work, and raise a family, as you said during your State of the State address, we must make sure that the policies passed and implemented by the State of Ohio allow for that to happen.

Therefore, I ask that you line-item veto the following provisions:

Fiscally Responsible Tax Policy

Your remarks highlighted the progress made through investing in the state while also having one of the lowest effective income tax rates in the country. That key balance of having the resources to build infrastructure, provide targeted state support, and maintain critical government services that attract businesses and workers alike is foundational to the successes you detailed.

But we cannot remain the "number one" state for infrastructure and economic development investment if we do not have a fiscally responsible revenue policy that supports both state and

local government. This means a tax structure that not only invests in our communities but also provides tax relief for those who need it the most.

We cannot show that our doors are open for business when so many of our local governments will have trouble keeping the lights on and roads paved with these proposals. We cannot convince people that Ohio is the best place to thrive and raise a family when we choose millionaires and billionaires over kids, working families, and senior citizens. It is critical that this budget set up Ohio for success not just in this moment but with the resiliency to face uncertainty in the years to come. The following provisions hurt the fiscal foundation of our state and should be vetoed to keep Ohio strong:

TAXCD103: Phase-in of a flat income tax rate

Background: This provision cuts the tax on income over \$100,000 from 3.5% to 3.125% in FY25 and down to 2.75% in FY26 which will be the rate for all income over \$26,050 with other related changes to filing options and credits including freezing increasing brackets and personal exemption with inflation for tax year 2025 and 2026.

In order to afford this reckless tax cut for only the wealthiest Ohioans, several popular programs were raided:

- Grow Your Own Teacher (\$9M in FY26)
- Literacy Improvement (\$10M in FY26)
- Broadband Pole Replacement (\$15M in FY26)
- Rail Safety Crossings (\$15M in FY26)

In order to afford this reckless tax cut for only the wealthiest Ohioans, several important funds saw their interest earnings permanently redirected to the GRF:

- Budget Stabilization Fund (i.e., Rainy Day Fund)
- All Ohio Future Fund
- Brownfield Remediation Fund & Building Demolition Fund
- Roadwork Development Fund
- Sports Gaming Education Profits Fund

Reason to veto: This reckless, unnecessary \$1.6 billion tax giveaway overwhelmingly benefits the wealthiest taxpayers across the state while leaving everyone else behind. Forty percent of the cuts will go to the top 1% alone - those with an average income of \$1.78 million. Meanwhile, regular, working-class Ohioans making \$100,000 or less will see hardly any relief at all. This will devastate the state's ability to fund basic public services in the future.

With this revenue alone, the state could afford to:

1. Implement the Governor's Child Tax Credit and a Family Caregiver Credit
2. Double the homestead exemption while making every senior eligible again, and restore the 10% and 2.5% property tax rollbacks to all levies

3. Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan, reducing the state's overreliance on property taxes to fund public schools

TAXCD114: Raising sales tax on everyday purchases

Background: To make the budget balance after handouts to billionaires, this budget raises sales taxes on Ohioans for the sales of newspapers, rental payments for certain motor vehicles, the transfer of copyrighted motion picture films, purchases at refrigerated food vending machines, and several other expenses.

Reason to veto: These exemptions should be vetted individually through the legislative process to assess their impact on the State of Ohio. The sales tax is the most regressive type of tax, and the sudden inclusion of these common items will harm both the industries involved and the pocketbooks of all Ohioans.

COMCD45, OBMCD51: Sports Facility Grant Fund and Unclaimed Funds

Background: Requires state taking of unclaimed funds belonging to Ohioans and redirecting to qualifying sports and culture projects.

- Deposits \$1B initial escheatment (transfer of ownership) into the Ohio Cultural and Sports Facility Performance Grant Fund (Fund 5CY1) and requires OBM to use \$600M of the funds to support construction at Brook Park.
- Creates a continual process to take money that is otherwise claimable by individual Ohioans and put it in a fund for grants to stadiums and similar 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.

Reason to veto: This is money that belongs to Ohioans—not the state. Unclaimed funds should only be used in times of dire need in a manner that directly serves the public good, not to fund the construction of private sports stadiums.

Additionally, the proposed changes to the Modell Law would make it harder for local communities to protect the significant public investments that have already been made with taxpayer dollars to support stadium construction and surrounding infrastructure, as well as the private investments made by small businesses that rely on the proximity of professional sports teams to drive business. Weakening this law makes it easier for teams to walk away from the local governments, small businesses, and fans that have supported them for decades with no real accountability.

TAXCD104: Levy Elimination

Background: This provision eliminates replacement levies for all local governments. In addition, prohibits school districts from using several other types of levies or otherwise combining ballot questions.

Reason to veto: These sections dramatically impact the ability of schools and local subdivisions to deliver vital services to the people of Ohio. These provisions have not been fully vetted and in several instances fail to provide clear guidance which will create confusion and lead to serious unintended consequences.

TAXCD107: 20-mill floor calculation

Background: Adds emergency and substitute tax levies to the calculation of the 20-mill floor with a fiscal impact of a loss of tens of millions to over a hundred million dollars annually.

Reason to veto: This budget provision primarily serves to punish public schools and local governments while failing to provide meaningful property tax relief to Ohio homeowners. This procedure has not been vetted. Early estimates are that this will directly remove more than 1/3 of districts from the 20-mill floor. No one has any idea of how this will impact tax calculation or interact with the school funding formula. It is reckless to implement this level of change without knowing the consequences.

TAXCD109: Campaign Contribution Tax Credit Repeal

Background: Repeals, effective 1/1/26, the income tax credit of up to \$50 (or \$100 for joint filers) for contributions to certain state political candidates.

Reason to veto: This modest tax credit supports participation in our democratic system for regular Ohioans. Repealing this program will make such participation less accessible.

TAXCD80: Tax Break for Pregnancy Resource Centers

Background: Authorizes a personal income tax deduction for contributions, up to \$750 per year, to a pregnancy resource center that meets certain criteria.

Reason to veto: The large size of this credit is completely disproportionate to similar policies incentivizing donations and sets a problematic precedent for future credits. The state should not be incentivizing investments in facilities that push an agenda that flies in the face of the constitutionally protected rights of Ohioans.

OBMCD44: State Appropriation Limitations Changes

Background: Starting in FY28, restricts state appropriation changes to only a 3.5% annual increase preventing consideration of population growth and actual interest rates and adding consideration of related funds and transfers from general revenue.

Reason to veto: This provision will have the effect of triggering the appropriation limit sooner, making it harder for the state to keep up with inflation and lower costs for Ohioans in the future. It will tie the hands of future governors to invest in their priorities and the needs of all Ohioans.

Investing in our Workforce

During your State of the State address, you shared your excitement for adding private sector jobs and new state projects by taking us on a trip across Ohio and sharing new investments and construction. But we've seen that companies are already starting to re-examine these investments, such as Intel, who announced earlier this year it was delaying its major project in Licking County, Ohio due to financial and political concerns.

You also discussed the creation of the Ohio Workforce Team, which our Lieutenant Governor is set to lead with the noble effort of reducing workplace barriers for Ohioans. However, if we want to make Ohio a place that breaks down barriers to entering the workforce, where businesses can thrive and expand, and where we have the most competitive, high-paying job opportunities, then we must invest in Ohio and put forward policies that keep Ohio competitive and attractive to workers. Unfortunately, the following provisions are harmful to that effort:

DPSCD61: Driver Training Requirements

Background: Requires all individuals under 21 to complete full driver's education and 50 hours of practice to get a license, expands the abbrev. adult training course to 21+, allows driver ed. to be completed anytime during the one-year permit period.

Reason to veto: Unlike in the as introduced budget which included funding for additional driver training this provision is a punishment to our young adults. Without funding or any support to access training and driving hours this harms the economic success of those seeking education or to enter the workforce and businesses that are desperate to employ qualified employees who can get to their jobs. A cost of hundreds of dollars and a requirement to take 50 hours of time with a licensed driver will be prohibitive for many and compound our existing problem of teenagers from low-income areas being much less likely to obtain a driver's license.

JFSCD40: Exclusion of sugar-sweetened beverages under SNAP

Background: This would make it so that people cannot use their SNAP funds to purchase any sugar-sweetened beverages with costs to JFS to attempt the waiver and costs and burden to SNAP retail locations if approved.

Reason to veto: This exclusion will only further reduce the options SNAP recipients have for how they use their funds, not improve health. This does nothing to address access and affordability issues that influence food selections. Moreover, it is an anti-business provision that limits commerce and the ability to sell products to large swaths of consumers who rely upon SNAP, forcing food retailers and small businesses to police a government program and comply with needless red tape.

IFSCD35: SNAP work requirement waivers and exemptions

Background: Prohibits ODJFS from seeking, applying for, or renewing a waiver from the work requirements that apply to able-bodied adults without dependents receiving SNAP benefits.

Reason to veto: Ohio currently has robust work requirements for SNAP beneficiaries, but when an economic downturn causes high unemployment in all or parts of the state, having the flexibility to temporarily waive these requirements is important to ensuring Ohioans struggling to find a job still have access to food. With this change, the next time we enter a recession, pandemic, or major economic disruption, this law will prevent Ohioans from accessing food even when our own data shows there is simply no work available. These waivers have been a critical tool to protect our families, our local economies, and our ability to recover and should not be prohibited.

LOCCD3: Ban eminent domain for recreational trails

Background: Establishes that the taking of property for recreational trails does not satisfy the public use requirement of Ohio's eminent domain law, with exceptions for RTAs acquiring right-of-way and for construction of sidewalks.

Reason to veto: Banning eminent domain for trails will have unintended consequences of halting projects that Ohioans want in their communities. This provision directly conflicts with home rule authority and the ability of communities to follow the will of their constituents as expressed via master plan documents. Local governments aren't using eminent domain to steal land from farmers—they're turning nuisance and abandoned properties into public assets.

DASCD46: State Employee Work Location Order and bargaining preemption

Background: Requires state agency employees to return to work on-site beginning January 1, 2026. Some appointing authority flexibility.

Reason to veto: Remote work as appropriate to operational needs has saved state tax dollars and helped retain employees. In addition, this is an attack on collective bargaining through a prohibition on negotiating work location.

Thorough & Efficient Education

The State of Ohio has an obligation to provide a thorough and efficient system of public education, which is not only a moral imperative and the right thing to do, but it's a legal obligation founded in the state constitution. This state budget shirks that responsibility while providing record-breaking funding to charter schools and private school vouchers.

Your State of the State address expressed a clear desire to positively impact the literacy rate for Ohioans. I know of the incredible dedication of First Lady Fran DeWine to expand the Imagination Library so that more children under the age of five have access to literature where they can better understand the world around them and begin their journey to becoming lifelong readers earlier in life. This is also deepened through access to literature at our local libraries, which serve everyone from the early learner child, to their older siblings, to their parents, to their grandparents, all of whom rely on their local library for support and resources.

I appreciated your recognition during your speech that “[a]s more of our children become proficient in the essential life skill of reading, they will be more prepared to thrive in the classroom, in the workforce, and in life.” I share in your goal but know that to achieve this, we must invest in the people that are educating our students and provide them the necessary tools and technology they need to educate in a twenty-first century environment. We must invest in our public schools, where just under 90% of Ohio’s school age children attend and which serve as the hearts of our communities. We must remove the unnecessary barriers that make it harder for schools to serve their students and retain quality educators, as well as provisions that strip necessary resources from our public schools. The unfortunate truth is that there are many provisions in this budget that will actively undercut that effort. Therefore, I ask for your line-item veto on the following provisions:

TAXCD91, portions of TAXCD110: Caps School District Carryover at 40%

Background: Requires, generally, the County Budget Commission to reduce the property tax rates of residents within certain school districts if that district’s carry-over balance exceeds 40% of the previous fiscal years’ general fund expenditures.

Reason to veto: This policy should be vetoed to protect fiscally responsible school districts from what would amount to a large cut—money stripped from schools that have prudently managed taxpayer resources. Forcing districts to choose between maintaining essential educational services and offering one-time property tax relief is both reckless and shortsighted.

EDUCD118: Creates Non-Chartered Educational Savings Account Program

Background: Creates a new program administered that directs up to 75% of the value of an EdChoice Scholarship into an ESA to apply toward tuition and fees for any nonpublic school student not enrolled in a state voucher program.

Reason to veto: Educational savings accounts for nonchartered nonpublic schools undermine fiscal responsibility by allowing taxpayer dollars to flow to unregulated private entities that are not required to meet even the most basic standards of transparency or academic quality. By funding institutions that have deliberately avoided state oversight, this approach opens the door to waste, fraud, and abuse. Spending \$35M on this new program is emblematic of this budget's misguided priorities, as the state's funding formula increase for ALL traditional public schools is only \$32M in FY26.

PENCD9: Revises STRS Board Membership

Background: 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.

Reason to veto: This provision was added without stakeholder input and received no consideration during the entirety of the budget process. Altering the composition of the board in this manner risks disrupting the structure and diminishes the representation of those who are contributing members to the system. Stripping most of the elected representatives from the STRS Board not only disregards the will of those who voted for them, but also risks eroding confidence in the integrity of the entire system.

RDFCD2: Changes to Library Funding

Background: 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 this biennium compared to current law.

Reason to veto: Vetoing the proposed revised code changes eliminating the GRF contribution to the public library fund would maintain the state's commitment to our libraries and recognize their contribution to flourishing communities.

SOSCD14: Requires Partisan School Board Elections

Background: Requires candidates for the school district board of education or ESC governing board to be nominated by primary election or, for an independent candidate, by a nominating petition.

Reason to veto: Turning school board races into partisan contests will give control to county political parties to promote candidates rather than a meaningful evaluation of candidates' qualifications, experience, and priorities. Firefighters, law enforcement, and civil servants in local, state, and federal government serve on our local school boards and are able to do so because these elections are non-partisan. It would be harmful to make these dedicated public servants choose between their livelihoods and their contribution to our schools.

EDUCD31: Lowers Quality Standards for Community Schools

Background: Enables more community schools to qualify as “quality” by lowering criteria of who qualifies. Specifically striking the language that “Requires DEW to designate as a community school of quality each community school for which . . . Requires the first payment to such a school be made within 30 days of the bill's effective date and based on the adjusted full-time equivalent number of students enrolled in the school for the fiscal year for which the payment is being made.”

Reason to veto: Although important in rewarding those community schools that do perform well, we do not want that to come at the cost of lowering standards. Lowering standards for schools to receive these funds not only compromises educational excellence but sends the wrong message about accountability and achievement. Taxpayer dollars should be directed towards truly high-quality schools with proven outcomes.

EDUCD149: Revises Community school sponsor evaluations

Background: Revises sponsor evaluations by excluding closed schools from academic ratings, removes peer reviews for "effective" or "exemplary" sponsors, and pauses evaluations for top-rated sponsors for 3 to 5 years.

Reason to veto: This policy should be vetoed because it weakens accountability by shielding sponsors from meaningful evaluation, allowing poor performance to go more unaddressed and removes oversight mechanisms that ensure quality and transparency in education.

LIBCD5: Creates restrictions on library materials

Background: Requires a public library to place material related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in a portion of the library that is not primarily open to the view of minors.

Reason to veto: All children deserve to see themselves as heroes in their stories. This will burden libraries, limit access to broad and vaguely defined materials, and could be particularly challenging for small libraries.

EDUCD101: Restrictions on Student Transportation via Mass Transit Systems

Background: Requires a school district in a county with a population between 530,000 and 540,000 in the most recent census, that uses mass transit systems to transport students to and from a community or chartered nonpublic school to ensure that any transfer between routes does not occur at the central hub for the mass transit system.

Reason to veto: This policy will make it more difficult for children in Montgomery County to access reliable transportation to school, placing an additional burden on the county and school districts without offering a practical or effective solution to address the broader challenges of school transportation across the state.

EDUCD50: Permit Teacher Assignments Regardless of Seniority

Background: Requires a school district superintendent to assign teachers based on the best interests of the students and prohibits them from using seniority or continuing contract status.

Reason to veto: Assigning teachers without consideration for their certified subject areas or grade-level expertise undermines both instructional quality and educational equity. In your state of the state speech, you noted that “[f]ew things make more of a difference in a young student’s life than the impact of a truly outstanding teacher.” Established and collectively bargained standards and qualifications support the professional integrity of our teachers and students’ learning outcomes, and make those truly outstanding teachers want to stay in their roles.

SBECD2: Eliminates Elected State Board of Education Membership

Background: Abolishes the 11 elected offices and reduces the appointed membership from 8 members to 5. Requires the remaining members to represent each of a rural, suburban, urban school district, a community school, and charter school.

Reason to veto: These changes strip Ohioans of their voice in education. When positions are no longer held accountable, citizens lose their influence over decisions that most directly impact them and further push them away from wanting to be involved in the process.

Health Care and Public Health

During your State of the State speech, you recognized the importance of wrap-around services and clinics to the overall health and well-being of a child. You also recognized schools as “the center of our communities” and the importance of cost-effective clinics “where everyone can have access.” Real healthcare access, honest and truthful medical advice, and Medicaid coverage are mission critical to achieving those stated goals. Yet this budget strips children and families of

access to care, diverts state funding from critical programs, and undercuts the veracity of medically-sound opinions. It is cruel and will harm many Ohioans, including those individuals you uplifted in your speech. Therefore, I ask that you veto the following provisions:

OBMCD32, OBMCD29: Medicaid Group VIII Federal Cuts Trigger

Background: Require the Ohio Dept. of Medicaid (ODM) discontinue coverage of the Group VIII Medicaid expansion enrollees if the federal match falls below 90%; and further requires Medicaid to certify GRF savings monthly and extract it into the Budget Stabilization Fund and Sales Tax Holiday Fund at the end of the year.

Reason to veto: Barring Ohioans from life-saving healthcare overnight without the legislature and your office first debating and creating a real solution is not only cruel and morally reprehensible, but fiscally irresponsible. The risk of immediate elimination of health care access for 800,000 and financial ruin and closure for many critical care providers is harmful to the financial and physical health of the state.

MCD41: Elimination of 0-3 Yr Old Continuous Enrollment Request

Background: Eliminates current law requiring ODM to seek approval for a continuous Medicaid enrollment waiver for Medicaid-eligible children from birth through age three.

Reason to veto: This waiver was a bipartisan priority in the last General Assembly, and ODM has already invested time and money applying for it in accordance with the last budget. Statistically, it is known that most of these babies qualify for Medicaid but lose coverage because of outside factors. A veto will allow the federal approval process to move forward and prevent gaps in healthcare coverage for over 20,000 Ohio babies at a time when Ohio's infant mortality rates remain disturbingly high.

KIDCD54, KIDCD51: 3D diagnostic ultrasound machines for crisis pregnancy centers.

Background: These provisions would require DCY to use \$5 million GRF dollars to purchase 3D ultrasound machines and gift them to private entities without any requirement that qualified individuals perform the ultrasounds or give accurate information.

Reason to veto: This provision requires using state dollars to buy expensive medical equipment, then giving it away to non-medical settings to be used by underqualified or entirely unqualified individuals. This will mislead and harm those who receive such ultrasounds, causing them to wrongly think they have received medical treatment.

MCD53: Managed Care Organization (MCO) Random Assignment

Background: Requires ODM to randomly assign a MCO to a Medicaid enrollee if they don't choose one when signing up.

Reason to veto: Enrollees should have a choice for their MCO, but if they don't or can't decide right away, Medicaid should be able to use objective information like geography of providers and MCO quality ratings to make the assignment. The managed care contracting program is effective because it allows the state to demand and reward quality, high value care. Randomizing assignment erodes the incentive for higher performance from entities receiving billions in state contracts.

MCDCD73: Group VIII Eligibility 6-Month Redeterminations

Background: Requires ODM to conduct eligibility redeterminations for Group VIII enrollees every six months.

Reason to veto: This is a \$30M unfunded mandate on county governments in a budget that continually requires local governments to provide services without supporting the cost. Increased redeterminations in the past have shown this is not feasible and typically leads to increased churn and administrative burden costs that can minimize any possible savings from disenrollment.

MCDCD45: Prohibit consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion within Medicaid

Background: Prohibits ODM from paying for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Reason to veto: This will make it difficult for ODM to address real quantified health disparities among certain groups in Ohio, if those efforts are considered "DEI." About half of all births in Ohio are covered by Medicaid and at the same time Black babies are more than two times as likely to die in their first year as white babies with tragically similar disparities in complications and death for Black versus white mothers. Vetoing this provision will save lives.

MCDCD68: Prohibits Gender Transition Mental Health Services

Background: Prohibits the distribution of Medicaid funds to provide mental health services that "promote or affirm" social gender transition.

Reason to veto: This is another way to target a vulnerable community and further added to struggles of the LGBTQ+ community in Ohio. This will hurt parental rights and medical choices of many Ohio families with transgender and LGBTQ+ members who are 4.8x time more likely to consider suicide.

DOHCD26: Decreased Funds Lead Abatement Tax Credit

Background: Restrictions the Ohio Dept. of Health (ODH) from issuing only up to \$3 million in the lead abatement tax credit certificates per fiscal year, and instead keep current law of \$5 million per fiscal year.

Reason to veto: Although I was glad to see the tax credit increasing to \$40,000 in the budget, that will do little if overall there are fewer certificates issued due to the lowered cap. It is known that it costs on average \$30,000 per property for abatement, other lead abatement programs have been cut in this budget and even maintaining current law will not reach all of the 4,500 Ohio children who tested with elevated blood-lead levels in 2024.

DOHCD34: Anti-Choice Abstinence Sex Education

Background: \$7.8 million per fiscal year funding for the Ohio Adolescent Health Centers (OAHC).

Reason to veto: OAHC is a controversial coalition made up of crisis pregnancy centers and abstinence-only curriculum groups with well-known anti-abortion and religious-based views, wanting to place their faith views into sex education. We should only be funding evidence based public health education and this money could be used for other proven solutions.

DOHCD40: Restrictive scientifically incorrect requirements for Department of Health

Background: Enshrines in Ohio revised code factually incorrect standards for the department of health which is tasked with maintaining accurate demographic information in the state.

Reason to veto: The definition of when sex is assigned in the language (at conception) is at a time when all embryos are female. Language like "unchangeable" could threaten transgender individuals IDs and records and entirely excludes intersex Ohioans from inclusion in state law and policy. This policy could be very expensive to uphold administratively and does not match the standards of other states.

DOHCD14: Prohibits Youth Homelessness Funding for Recognizing Social Gender Transition

Background: Prevents the distribution of funds to youth shelters that "promote or affirm" social gender transition.

Reason to veto: Cutting needed funding to shelters for showing empathy to a growing population of LGBTQ+ youth who are not shown empathy sometimes by family is not right. Those who need it the most, the budget chooses to hurt them. LGBTQ youth are at more than double the risk of homelessness compared to non-LGBTQ peers, often the product of escalated tension inside the home over time.

CDPCD13: Eliminates Diversity of Chemical Dependency Board Membership

Background: Eliminates existing law requiring that the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board (OCDP) membership is that 1) not more than half of OCDP's Board be of the same gender and 2) at least two voting members be of African, Native American, Hispanic, or Asian descent.

Reason to veto: There is a diverse number of Ohioans facing addiction struggles across the state, and they are better served if we have a board from all walks of life who can better relate to as many of these groups as possible and their struggles.

DOHCD17, DOHCD35: Prohibit Funds for Emergency Abortions Referrals

Background: Removes the exception for allowing state funds to be used to counsel or refer for abortion in the case of a medical emergency.

Reason to veto: Not allowing exceptions for medical emergencies endangers the lives of women in Ohio who have a right to bodily autonomy and medical freedom. Reproductive rights and access to abortion care are protected in our constitution and this violates the will of our voters.

DOHCD37: Create New Abortion Reporting Rules and E-Dashboard

Background: Requires ODH to develop an electronic dashboard to publish on a monthly basis abortion data that includes information on age, in-state versus out-of-state resident, and total number of abortions performed on minors.

Reason to veto: The new public data reporting requirements could lead to violations of privacy and federal law, leading to lawsuits costing taxpayer dollars. This is costly and duplicative of existing reporting requirements while taking time away from doctors and healthcare providers to treat their patients.

DOHCD43: Elimination Rare Disease Advisory Council

Background: Abolishes the Rare Disease Advisory Council.

Reason to veto: The members of the board were only just reappointed to their two-year terms, and this board is very important to the advocate of addressing rare disease in Ohio. The Rare Disease Advisory Council helps address the unique challenges rare disease patients face every day of their lives by providing a forum to analyze the needs of the rare disease community and make recommendations on how to improve public policy for Ohioans.

DNRC34: H2Ohio Fund prohibitions

Background: Prohibits H2Ohio funds from being used to purchase land or conservation easements, which functionally cripples DNR's wetlands programming.

Reason to veto: This provision unnecessarily gets in DNR's way when it comes to critical and long-lasting water quality work. Consistent investments are needed to yield long-term water quality improvements, and DNR's wetlands program is one of the most critical assets in this work. This administration has begun the vital work of cleaning up our great lake, rivers, and drinking water. Now is not the time to roll back that legacy.

Quality Higher Education

It was a highlight to hear you express the importance of exposing our students "to all of the great colleges and universities we have right here in the State of Ohio." Your commitment to the Governor's merit scholarship, access to our campuses for Ohio students, affordability, and connecting learning with careers are priorities we share.

Despite what should be universal agreement on these goals, provisions in H.B. 96 undercut the accessibility and quality of high education options. Career pathway degrees cannot appear from nothing under threat of funding cuts. Students cannot always navigate systems on their own and university administration should include input from both those directing the work and those in the classrooms and research labs.

To keep our colleges and universities centers for talent and education of Ohio's next leaders, I ask for vetoes of the following provisions:

BORCD107: Nullify shared governance and give university trustees complete authority over new programs and curriculums

Background: Grants a state institution's trustees final authority to review and establish new academic programs, schools, colleges, institutes, departments, & centers.

Reason to veto: This is a major policy change to insert into the budget that cuts against the core ideas behind universities' shared governance model. Faculty are in the classroom every day, while trustees don't have the training or on-the-ground experience to manage day-to-day operations in the way this would require.

BORCD115: FAFSA support team system

Background: Repeals the requirement that the Chancellor of Higher Education establish and administer a statewide system of regional FAFSA support teams to support public schools with FAFSA completion and college access programming.

Reason to veto: Lack of FAFSA completion is a major issue preventing students from receiving postsecondary education and limiting their future prospects. This is an easy solution, and this line item likely has a return on investment well beyond its price tag.

BORCD98: Eliminates the Campus Community Grant Program and funding

Background: Repeals the Campus Community Grant Program, which provided funding to institutionally sanctioned student organizations to support intergroup and interfaith outreach and cultural competency between institutionally sanctioned student orgs.

Reason to veto: This program was created in the wake of the October 7th attacks at the urging of Jewish stakeholders concerned about rising antisemitism on college campuses. The veto cannot restore funding, but it can show commitment to our Jewish students and faculty.

BORCD31: \$75M in FY27 For Release After Demonstrated SB 1 Compliance

Background: Distribution of \$75M of SSI funding FY27 is restricted unless the relevant committees in the House and Senate specifically approve after finding compliance with recently enacted S.B. 1 requirements.

Reason to veto: This provision is the legislature holding appropriated funding hostage until a college or university proves to the satisfaction of individual legislative committees that it has complied with the law. This violates the separation of powers and the requirement that the legislature act as a body through votes on legislation to make decisions and appropriate funds. Giving power to a small subset of legislators to directly interpret and determine compliance with legal standards sets a dangerous precedent and should be removed from the bill while keeping the funding intact.

Other Vetoes in the Public Interest

Near the end of your remarks, you quoted Lieutenant Governor Tressel in stating, “our success is measured not just by wins, but by the legacy we leave behind.” You closed noting hope for the future and the importance of our commitment to each other. Unfortunately, many provisions in H.B. 96 as passed threaten that legacy and commitment.

It has become apparent in recent years the harm to public trust when corruption, secrecy, and partisan motivation enter government. I ask you to veto the provisions below to protect that public trust and shared duty to our fellow Ohioans:

ELCCD 1,2: Replacement of independent campaign finance enforcement with partisan control of campaign finance enforcement through the Election Integrity Commission

Background: In a state with a sadly earned reputation for political corruption, this budget creates partisan control of campaign finance enforcement. In this provision, the Secretary of State investigates and makes determinations of if there is a violation and appeals go to a board chaired by a Secretary of State appointee.

Reason to veto: Campaign finance law investigation and enforcement should always include independence from partisan politics which is eliminated by this provision. The people should be able to trust there will be unbiased application of the law and this sets up the exact opposite. Veto the entirety of these changes and make the legislature address worthy reform and long-term funding this fall.

SOSCD15: Creates Election Integrity Unit for investigation of all Title 35 Violations

Background: Grants the secretary of state through the Election Integrity Unit law enforcement powers to investigate crimes including subpoenas and compelling creation of evidence with none of the due process protections examined in the bill.

Reason to veto: This proposal has not been fully vetted and will jeopardize the ability of voters, Boards of Elections, and candidates to work with the chief elections officer of the state without having to constantly worry about it turning into a criminal investigation.

AGOCD40: Hides all intra-general assembly records and communication from public records disclosure

Background: This change made only in conference committee exempts all communication and records within the general assembly from public records disclosure during the two-year general assembly.

Reason to veto: This is a direct attack on transparency and accountability and would allow general assembly members to hide from the public in a way no other public office in Ohio has or should have.

AGOCD31: Broad expansion of public records exemptions

Background: New exemptions from public record disclosure for specific investigatory work product, trial preparation records, & attorney work records along with language on when the exemption ends (after any possible related case).

Reason to veto: Ohio has long had strong public records laws because in a democracy government belongs to the people. Allowing any record that is investigating a crime or was prepared only because of possible litigation denies the public this right. These are broad exemptions which could block many currently available records like accident reports and deserved independent vetting.

JCRCD8: Proposed rules before JCARR

Background: This provision requires the General Assembly to enact a bill approving a proposed administrative rule if the rule will cost more than \$100,000 to implement or for a person to comply or will impose an annual effect on Ohio's economy of \$1,000,000 or more.

Reason to veto: This will create a burdensome process to adopt rules and a low threshold for legislative interference. Other states with a process like this provision have higher dollar thresholds and no JCARR process. There is also no requirement that JCARR act objectively in deciding whether to block a rule which can lead to politically connected moneyed interests blocking execution of laws passed in the public interest

AGOCD41: Abolish CIIC, Transfers Duties to AGO

Background: Abolishes CIIC and transfers their duties to AGO. Creates the Office of Correctional Facility Inspection Services within AGO to carry out the inspection duties. Requires the Office to publish an annual report on its inspection findings from the previous calendar year.

Reason to veto: The CIIC as a legislative agency serves a critical independent oversight role for our state's largest bureaucracy and highest agency payroll costs. The committee and its staff provide a crucial window behind the fences.

Rather than investing in our state's greatest resource – people – the provisions above hold Ohioans back from reaching that fullest potential your administration has been striving for. Budgets are about choices, and you now have the choice to strike these harmful proposals and make key strides towards the path you spoke about in your State of the State address. I respectfully request, for the dignity and wellbeing of all Ohioans and to better align your final budget as Governor with your expressed vision of the State of Ohio, that you veto the above items in Sub. House Bill 96.

Sincerely,



C. Allison Russo
State Representative
7th House District