

HOUSE FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 64 TESTIMONY OF
Cole Hassay
President, John Carroll University Student Union

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, my name is Cole Hassay and I am the Student Union President at John Carroll University. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss House Bill 64 with you today and specifically the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. OCOG provides support to Ohio's need-based students to attend a public or private colleges or universities in Ohio.

John Carroll University is located in University Heights, OH, about ten miles east of downtown Cleveland and was founded by Jesuits in 1886. Its first home was the current site of St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland. In a quest for more land, an east side search for a new location began in the 1920's. Land was purchased in what is now University Heights, and John Carroll University admitted its first class in 1935.

John Carroll University contributes over \$127 million in total economic impact to the greater Cleveland region. The university represents the largest source of income tax revenue for the city of University Heights and has an average underclassmen size of 3,000 students. For twenty-five consecutive years, JCU has been ranked one of the top ten regional institutions by *U.S. News and World Report*. More than 500 Northeast Ohio businesses are owned or operated by John Carroll University alumni.

John Carroll is one of several Catholic institutions of higher education in Ohio. Catholic universities in Ohio, true to our collective missions and commitment to the inherent value of every student, are dedicated to enrolling and graduating Ohio's need-based students. Many need-based students are first generation college students who are part of the fabric of our student bodies.

As the President of the John Carroll University student body, I would like to spend my time today discussing the importance financial aid has on our students and their families.

The Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), currently funded at \$41 million for all independent college students, allows Ohio's need-based students the choice to attend an independent university. Combined with the commitment of generous institutional aid—which amounted to over **\$1 billion** among all independent colleges in Ohio in FY 2011-12—OCOG helps create the opportunity for these Ohio students and their families to obtain a four year independent college education. John Carroll contributes **57% of our operating budget to aid**.

71% of John Carroll's undergraduate students are from Ohio. We are committed to educating need-based students as it is an essential component of the school's Jesuit mission, but the results are the real story. We have a four-year 66% graduation rate and a near 80% six year graduation rate! We also have a 4.4% loan default rate (national average is 8.8%) and 60% of our graduates remain in Ohio upon receiving

their degree. Therefore, as you can see, OCOG funding to a college student at John Carroll is an investment in Ohio's future economy. Through OCOG, the state is enabling students to attend a school like John Carroll, and the University is doing its part by graduating students in 4 years and helping students become a contributing member of Ohio's economy.

The trend over the past decade has been a steady reduction in state funding for students attending independent colleges. In 2005, state grants to independent college students were as high as \$5,500 per student, but OCOG funding to independent schools was cut 50% by six years ago. Governor Ted Strickland's administration eliminated the Ohio Student Choice Grant entirely and cut OCOG in half. As an institution, we absorbed those cuts to ensure students could return the following year. We implemented employee furloughs and layoffs. This past budget cycle represented the fifth and sixth year of flat funding to OCOG (refer to chart).

In this competitive environment, it is important to call attention to the aid surrounding states are offering to their students, all of whom are Ohio's competitors. Ohio ranks *next to last* in the amount of per student funding provided by our neighboring states. We trail New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia. The only state we beat is Michigan...¹

The limited funding we receive from the state is essential to students and their families.

An increase to OCOG funding in this current budget cycle is necessary, not only to bolster Ohio's competitive advantage but to help our students who are so integral to Ohio's future. We are asking for an increase of \$30million in each fiscal year to OCOG. Ohio will only stand to benefit from this investment.

For understandable reasons, policy leaders have lately focused on technical degree attainment. While this is a worthy effort, I would like to remind this committee, the legislature and policy leaders to not forget the value OCOG has had on the lives of students all across Ohio. We will become teachers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, business owners, state government employees . . . and even legislators. Many OCOG recipients are the first in their family to attend college and most will stay in Ohio.

¹<http://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html>
<http://www.isac.org/isac-gift-assistance-programs/map/index.html>
<http://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/state-grant-program/pdf/2014-2015/Program-Manual.pdf>
http://www.in.gov/sfa/files/2014-2015_State_Financial_Aid_Menu_%28Adopted%29.pdf
<https://www.kheaa.com/website/kheaa/ktg?main=1>
https://secure.cfwv.com/Financial_Aid_Planning/Scholarships/Scholarships_and_Grants/West_Virginia_Higher_Education_Grant.aspx
<https://www.ohiohighered.org/ocog/award-charts#ac1415>
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mistudentaid/MTGFactSheet_452035_7.pdf

An increase in OCOG funding in this current budget cycle is necessary, not only to bolster Ohio's competitive advantage but to help our need-based students who are so integral to Ohio's future. All Ohio students deserve the opportunity to receive an affordable college education, whether they choose to attend a public or private institution. We commit that we are putting OCOG funding to good use and Ohio will only stand to benefit from this investment.

Consistent with the request of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, we ask that OCOG funding be increased in this biennial budget.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.