

**STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION FOR PROFESSIONAL  
ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS  
TESTIMONY  
2018-2019 BIENNIAL OPERATING BUDGET  
FINANCE- GENERAL GOVERNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
Amanda Uwague, Assistant Executive Director  
February 22, 2017**

Chairman McColley and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 operating budget. I am Amanda Uwague, Assistant Executive Director for the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors.

The Board's mission is to safeguard the health, safety, property, and welfare of the citizens of Ohio by providing effective licensure and regulation of professional engineers, professional surveyors, and firms offering engineering and surveying services in Ohio. This is accomplished by ensuring that only qualified individuals and firms are licensed to practice engineering and surveying in Ohio and ensuring that Ohio's laws and rules governing the practice of engineering and surveying are followed. The Board is able to ensure that only qualified individuals are licensed to practice engineering and surveying by requiring minimum educational standards, passing two national licensure exams, completing supervised engineering and surveying experience prior to licensure that demonstrates that the individual is qualified to be in responsible charge of engineering and surveying projects and also requiring continuing education requirements after licensure. The Board is also responsible for investigating complaints alleging violations of the practice act as well as complaints involving illegal practice by unqualified and unlicensed individuals and firms.

The Board's nearly 30,000 registrants are the professionals that design Ohio's roads, bridges and highways, design our homes, skyscrapers, schools, churches and commercial buildings, establish our property boundaries and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, inspect our waterways and ensures the safety of our drinking water. As an independent agency our staff has acquired the unique skills and expertise to address the needs and issues affecting the professions and the citizens of Ohio. Engineering and surveying are very technical professions that have a great impact on the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Ohio; therefore, an effective and knowledgeable staff is important to provide efficient and timely service to our licensees and students, as well as the public. Whether investigating complaints, evaluating exam applications and applications from out-of-state applicants, or providing exam and licensure verifications, the knowledge and expertise of the Board's staff ensures that the public is being protected. Currently, the Board regulates more than 27,000 professional engineers and surveyors and more than 2,700 engineering and surveying firms.

The Board's examination process is quite thorough and our licensing process ensures that only qualified individuals are admitted to the practice of engineering and surveying. In order to become a registered professional engineer or professional surveyor in Ohio, one must receive a four-year accredited engineering or surveying degree, take and pass an 8-hour fundamentals examination, obtain four years of acceptable engineering or surveying experience and then pass an 8-hour principles and practice examination. The Board administers examinations and licenses individuals in the following engineering disciplines: agricultural, architectural, chemical, civil, control systems, electrical and computer, environmental, fire protection, industrial, mechanical,

metallurgical and materials, mining and mineral processing, naval architecture, nuclear, petroleum, structural and surveying. The state of Ohio has more than 20 accredited colleges and universities that offer engineering and surveying programs leading to professional licensure. The Board and its staff work closely with the colleges and universities to prepare their graduates for successful transition into the fields of engineering and surveying.

The Board consists of five members appointed by the Governor and employs eight full-time staff members to accomplish its mission. We are one of the largest engineering and surveying boards in the United States in terms of registrants, yet we have one of the lowest staff to registrant ratios for regulatory Boards in the United States and the State of Ohio.

#### **Accomplishments during FY 2016**

- Board staff sent out 28,932 renewals and processed 26,628 professional engineer and surveyor renewal applications for the 2016-2017 renewal period.
- Board staff reviewed 1,340 applications to take the engineering and surveying examinations or receive intern certification, an 11% increase over the previous year.
- Board staff reviewed and evaluated 861 applications for registration as professional engineers or surveyors by comity and approved 760.
- Board renewed 2,776 Certificates of Authorization for existing engineering and surveying firms and added 311 new engineering and surveying firms.
- The Board's investigative staff investigated 82 complaints during Fiscal Year 2016.

## **Performance Tracking**

Since 2011, the Board has utilized a process to track performance. We track performance by entering key dates and events into an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet calculates the mean, median and range for the time it takes from the initial receipt of the application or request for information to the approval of the application or distribution of information. By implementing this performance tracking system and reviewing the data monthly the Board is able to see how long it takes to evaluate and process applications and other requests for information. The Board is able to process and approve a licensure application within 24-48 hours. With this system we are able to monitor our responsiveness to our customers and improve our customer service.

## **Budget**

The Board receives no GRF; we are entirely supported by our fees. The Board's \$20 annual renewal fee (\$40 per biennial renewal) is currently the lowest registration fee of engineering and surveying boards in the United States. The Engineers and Surveyors Board is able to keep its expenses low by utilizing the Central Service Agency (CSA) to provide human resources, payroll and fiscal support and processing. The Board is one of thirty-two of Ohio's professional regulatory boards and commissions that share services through a central business office operated by the Central Service Agency (CSA), a division of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). The boards and commissions also share a common licensure system operated by the Department of Administrative Services Information Technology Division. DAS Information Technology Division also provides these thirty-two agencies with IT support, internet service and telecommunications. Sharing services through the creation of CSA and e-licensing were initiated

and developed by the collective efforts and cooperation of the participating boards and commissions. Because of this unique use of a shared central business office, the thirty-two participating boards and commissions do not have to hire individual human resource, fiscal and IT personnel and incur the expenses associated with these additional staff positions.

The Executive Budget proposal for the Board is \$1,123,966 for Fiscal Year 2018 and \$1,227,821 for Fiscal Year 2019. The Executive Budget is an increase of 8.6% for fiscal year 2018 and a 9.2% increase for fiscal year 2019. It is important to note that the Board has operated at flat or reduced funding levels since FY 2006 however with increased cost associated with the Board's rent, DAS cost and IT cost, the Board is requesting an increase for fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

***Cost increases factors for fiscal year 2018 and 2019***

- Increase of rent from moving from the LeVeque Tower to the Riffe building after an emergency relocation due to unsafe office conditions
- Increase in eLicense cost through DAS from an estimated \$10,898 in FY2018 to \$67,017 in FY2019
- Increase in overall IT cost of roughly 10%
- Increase in DAS cost and cost associated with the use of Central Service Agency of roughly 10%

The Board's revenue for the biennium is expected to exceed the budget request without any current fee increases. The Board believes that the funding recommendation for 2018 and 2019 in the Executive Budget recommendation will allow the Board to continue its current level of service and fulfill its mission to the citizens of Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Board's budget recommendation. At this time I would like to answer any questions you have.