

Hello Chairman Carfagna, Ranking Member Sweeney, and the entire finance subcommittee on Higher Education:

It is an honor to be here today and get to speak with you about the student experience at THE Ohio State University. My name is Julia Dennen, and I am the Student Body Vice President at Ohio State and am here today to represent the voices of 53,734 undergraduate buckeyes. The Undergraduate Student government has the unique opportunity to represent not only undergrads at the Columbus campus but every branch campus as well. We work with student organizations, faculty, and administration to address the concerns and passions of every Buckeye. It is our job, and our honor, to take the perspectives and experiences of students and translate them into meaningful projects and policies, advocating and empowering as best as we can, every day. This is why I am here. One of our main areas of focus is affordability- as I'm sure you know, college is more expensive than ever, and that burden falls directly on students. There are more non-traditional students than ever- students that are parents, working students, and students that return to education years after beginning it. Far more students pay their way on their own than ever before- and I am one of them.

Higher education has changed, our student population has changed, and our pathways to affordability need to reflect these changes in order to support these students.

And this is just one of the many facets of what our organization strives to accomplish daily- we work hard to increase sustainability on campus, to reinforce our values of diversity and inclusion, and we make a commitment to civic engagement- this fall alone, USG registered over 600 new voters- all of which are your constituents. We are so lucky to be at a university where students not only have a place at the table, but are the ones leading the conversation.

It's never a question of will a student be in the room, but which student will be.

Right now, as an in-state student, it costs almost \$22,000 a **year**. As an out of state student, it is almost double that at over \$40,000. This is without room and board, textbooks, and other materials necessary for students to achieve their potential, and honestly, reach their basic requirements on campus.

In USG, our efforts to minimize financial barriers exist in so many forms. We work in textbook affordability, partnering with the University to increase access to open-source textbooks, a worthwhile goal that the state can contribute to with a potential pilot program. We are strong supporters of post-secondary textbook tax exemption bill presented last year- a subject we advocated strongly for last year, in this very room- and it's so nice to be back! This still matters, this still affects students and will continue to do so far past my graduation date.

We work with the university to allocate more funds for scholarships and make sure that scholarships are accessible and visible to students, regardless of their background and regardless of their resources when they enter Ohio State.

We have implemented a new policy that allows students to take 21 credit hours without additional fees, instead of the previous 18 hours. Now, students can finish their college education if they are in their last two semesters by adding extra classes, rather than taking on the burden of an extra semester after those four years. In collaboration with administration through university fiscal committee, we have been able to eliminate **70%** of course fees, cutting unnecessary nickels and dimes students would rather spend on things like groceries, or putting gas in the car. We're lucky to be at Ohio State under the guidance of President Drake, who has committed to taking an unprecedented step towards college affordability. OSU has promised to provide any Pell-eligible in-state student with a scholarship that the rest of tuition and mandatory course fees- and this is not simply for first-time applicants, for regional campus transfers as well. I cannot express how lucky we are to go to a school that is so committed to minimizing barriers to affordability- however, we cannot stop here.

And while I am here to speak on the OSU experience, I know that there are thousands of other students at a myriad of other schools in that are not as lucky and students at Ohio State do not always feel the benefits of the programs just launches. We work every single day to make sure the programs offered are accessible and enriching for students- but we cannot work alone.

I believe in the power of government. I believe in the enormous power of the state, and of you, to represent and advocate for the students that are the future of Ohio. We cannot sustain the exponential increase in the cost of attending college- of continuing higher education, a step that is almost mandatory for students to obtain jobs available now, and to pay back their loans.

Students need more help. I believe in the personal responsibility of students in their fight to continue education- to learn how to invest their money, to learn how to invest in themselves. But with more state funding, and your continued support, what seems like a pipe dream could be possible.

We are a land grant institution for a reason, and we need the support of the state that we so proudly wear on our jerseys. I am here today to ask you to remember us as you continue your work here. While there are 53,743 Ohio State students, I hope I can provide you with few faces and stories today, while you do your unbelievable work protecting the future of public education.

Thank you so much for your time- if you have any questions, I am more than happy to answer them. And, always, go bucks.