

**STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION FOR PROFESSIONAL  
ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS**

**TESTIMONY**

**2020-2021 BIENNIAL OPERATING BUDGET**

**FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

John F. Greenhalge, Executive Director

April 11, 2019

Chairman Greenspan and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the fiscal year 2020-2021 operating budget. I am John F. Greenhalge, 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 applicant is qualified to be placed in responsible charge of engineering and surveying work 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 licenses nearly 30,000 professional engineers and professional surveyors who 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. Engineering and surveying are extremely technical professions whose work has a significant 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. As an independent agency our staff has acquired the unique and technical skills and expertise to address the needs and issues affecting the professions and the citizens of Ohio.

In order to become a registered professional engineer or professional surveyor in Ohio, an applicant must complete a four-year accredited engineering or surveying degree, take and pass a national fundamentals examination, obtain four years of progressive engineering or surveying experience and then pass a national principles and practice examination. The Board's requirements for registration in Ohio closely mirror the national model law that has been developed in conjunction with the other 50 states and U.S. territories so that licensees in Ohio and other states can practice across the United States without additional requirements. The

Board utilizes two national licensing exams that ensure that only qualified and competent individuals are admitted to the practice of engineering and surveying. 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.

## **Staffing**

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 the 2018/2019 biennium**

- The Board renewed 27,908 professional engineer and surveyor renewal applications for the 2018-2019 renewal period.
- Board staff reviewed 776 applications to take the NCEES Principles and Practice of Engineering or Surveying examinations.
- Board staff reviewed 521 applications for engineer intern [EI] or surveyor intern [SI] designation.
- Board staff reviewed and evaluated 684 applications for registration as professional engineers or surveyors by comity.
- Board renewed 2,791 Certificates of Authorization applications for firms offering and providing engineering and/or surveying services in Ohio.
- The Board's investigative staff investigated 120 complaints during FY 2018 and have investigated 98 complaints to date in FY 2019.

## **Customer Service and Performance Tracking**

Since 2011 the Board has utilized a process to track performance. The Board tracks how long it takes to approve individual and company licensure applications once a completed application is received. The Board is able to process and approve applications for individuals and companies

within 24-48 hours. With this system we are able to monitor our responsiveness to our customers and improve our customer service.

### **Board Priorities for FY 2020 and 2021**

- Continue to provide timely processing and evaluation of licensure applications to confirm that applicants have the requisite education, experience and exams.
- Investigate and adjudicate complaints alleging violations of the practice act.
- Educate the public and licensees on the examination and licensure process and requirements for professional registration.

### **Budget**

The Board receives no GRF; the Board is entirely supported by our fees. The Board's biennial renewal fee of \$40.00 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 twenty-five of Ohio's professional regulatory boards and commissions that share services through a central business office operated by the Central Service Agency, 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 twenty-five agencies with IT support, internet service and telecommunications. Sharing services through the creation of CSA and the eLicense database was 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 twenty-five 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 \$1,263,151 for fiscal year 2020 and \$1,312,259 for Fiscal Year 2021. The Executive Budget is an increase of 1.99% [\$24,653] from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020 and a 3.89% [\$49,108] increase from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021.

#### Reasons for additional funding:

##### *Operating and Personnel Costs*

- In the 2020-2021 biennium the Board will face significant increases in operating costs. Based on guidance provided by DAS the Board expects an increase in costs associated with services provided by DAS and the Central Service Agency, including increases in technology-related services provided by DAS IT. These costs include rent, fiscal and human resources support services provided by DAS Central Services Agency, IT,

procurement fees, and storage rental. In fiscal years 2020-2021 the vast majority of the Board's non-payroll expenses will go to services provided by DAS and other state agencies.

- In the upcoming biennium the Board's payroll costs will also increase significantly with the general wage increase [2.75% in 2020 and 3% in 2021], step increases for union positions and the expected rise in healthcare costs of 27%.
- The Board will also see increased costs related to the new eLicense database system. In the 2020-2021 biennium the Board's share of the eLicense database cost will increase \$23,943 [2020- \$9,378 and 2021- \$14,565]. The Board will also have significant increases in credit card processing fees since all applications, renewals and other service requests will now be done online and through credit card transactions.

#### *Investigations and Audit Costs*

- The Board also expects increased costs associated with the investigations and hearing cases for complaints involving violations of the registration act and noncompliance with the continuing professional development requirement.

The Board believes that the funding recommendation proposed in the Executive Budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 will permit 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.