

Testimony before the Senate Higher Education Finance  
Subcommittee on House Bill 64  
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Thank you Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Cafaro, and members of the Senate Higher Education Finance Subcommittee, for allowing me to testify on behalf of the University of Findlay and the students of Ohio's independent, nonprofit colleges and universities. My name is Kathy Fell and I am the University of Findlay's president.

The focus of my testimony today will be the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG). OCOG is the ONLY program in Ohio that provides support for needy students attending college.

Although neither intentional nor explicit, the governor's budget would cut \$2.8 million from students at independent colleges and universities, as has been explained previously by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio. Cuts like these undermine the ability of colleges like the University of Findlay to make our institution an option for low-income students.

I believe all of you would like the primary higher-education policy goal for our state to be increasing the number of adults who become college graduates. A 2014 University of Massachusetts national study shows that for every \$1,000 of state need-based aid that a student receives, his or her chances of graduating increased by approximately 2.5 percent. State subsidies increase graduation rates only half as much.

Today, OCOG is funded at a lower level than all need-based programs 20 years ago: \$95.8 million in FY 1995-96, compared to \$90.3 for OCOG in FY 2014-2015. While Ohio lags behind the nation in graduates, we also lag behind our border states in aid: in 2012-2013, Pennsylvania provided \$451 million and Indiana dedicated \$253 million to its neediest students.

Instead of creating a new program, such as the student loan debt relief program, the legislature could put those funds (\$30 million a year) towards OCOG to help students avoid debt in the first place. I would be grateful if you would consider this alternative and be happy to talk more with you about it.

These issues affect the University of Findlay directly. This year, 526 of our 740 deposited first-time students, including transfers, are from Ohio. Of those 526, 468 have completed a FAFSA at this time. Of those 468, 96 are OCOG eligible. That equals 20.5

percent of FAFSA filers and 18.3 percent of all new students. Of those OCOG eligible students:

- The average high school GPA is 3.47.
- The average ACT score is 23.2
- The average unmet need after all gift aid, meaning aid from our institution, Pell grants, SEOG, and OCOG, is still \$13,000.

Those figures are similar to other OCOG recipients at the university. This year, there were 386 UF students receiving OCOG.

Need-based aid is a small part of your larger budget of taxes, Medicaid, K-12 funding and billions of dollars in other programs. I ask that you ensure this small program continues to work for our hundreds of OCOG recipients, and that you ensure that regardless of what other policy changes you are considering, need-based aid continues to support Ohio students at our institution.

Thank you for allowing me to address you this morning, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.