

Kirsten Fowler  
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Good afternoon Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the higher education provisions of the House Bill 49. Our testimony will focus on textbook affordability, College Credit Plus, enrollment pathways, and the impact of state funds on students' experiences. My name is Kirsten Fowler and I am from Dublin, Ohio. I am a senior Diplomacy & Global Politics major and dual Master's student in Political Science at Miami University. After I graduate this May, I hope to pursue a career in international relations, eventually with the Department of State. My experiences at Miami have set me up for success in this field, and my colleagues and I are honored to have the opportunity to share with you examples of why your funding of higher education is critical for students to have the quality experiences that we have had.

We are here as part of Miami's Alternative Spring Break Government and Leadership Advocacy Conference, which brought 55 Miami students to Washington, D.C. and Columbus this week to speak with legislators such as yourselves about their Miami experiences. These 55 students represent 28 Ohio Senate Districts and 37 Ohio House districts, and we thank you, your colleagues, and all the legislative staff members who have welcomed us to Capitol Square this week.

In my four years at Miami, I have been able to accomplish a great deal. I participated in numerous student organizations, including Associated Student Government, Model United Nations, a bipartisan political group called the JANUS Forum, and the Honors Student Advisory Board. I studied abroad at the Miami University Dolibois European Center in Differdange, Luxembourg for a semester and lived in Washington, D.C. for two summers as an intern for the Department of State and U.S. Trade Representative. Finally, I have worked for the last year and a half as a student aide in the Miami Office of Institutional Relations and coordinate activities for the Government Relations Network, including the Alternative Spring Break Government and Leadership Advocacy Conference.

I have been fortunate enough to do all these things because of two main reasons: post-secondary credit earned during high school and financial aid provided by Miami. Before enrolling at Miami, I earned 48 Advanced Placement credits and 24 post-secondary credits through The Ohio State University. These 72 credit hours allowed me to pursue a major, three minors, and a Master's degree at Miami – and complete all within four years. Furthermore, Miami's generous financial aid package made it possible for me to graduate debt-free.

Miami has taken numerous measures to help make college more affordable for Ohio's students. The Miami Tuition Promise locks a student's tuition and fees for four years, ensuring scholarships retain their value and students and their families can plan ahead. Dual Bachelor's-Master's programs, such as mine in Political Science, allow students to earn a graduate degree simultaneously with their Bachelor's and graduate in four years while paying undergraduate rates. Miami students pay no additional tuition after 12 hours per semester, allowing them to graduate earlier with less debt or add double majors, double degrees, minors, internships, and study abroad opportunities. These opportunities allow students to further enhance and diversify their educational experience, making them more employable in the future.

When I graduate in May, I will have attended Ohio public schools from kindergarten through my Master's degree. The quality education and career preparation I received at all these schools, but especially Miami, would not be possible without the General Assembly's continued support for Ohio's public universities. We hope that as you continue with the budget process, you keep the experiences of the students appearing before you today, as well as that of our other 50 colleagues and all students around the state in mind.

I would now like to introduce my fellow Miami students, who are here to speak briefly about their experiences.

Annika Fowler, a first-year Finance and Political Science double major from Dublin, Ohio, is here as a representative of Miami's Associated Student Government and will address the student body's concerns regarding the governor's textbook proposal.

Will Armbruster, a sophomore Political Science major from North Ridgeville, Ohio, will speak about pathways to higher education and his experience at Miami's regional campus in Hamilton. If Ohio is to reach its 65% degree attainment goal by 2025, the state will need multiple pathways to higher education. Miami's regional campuses are one such pathway, providing the Hamilton, Middletown, and West Chester communities with access to a cost-effective, quality Miami education.

Lana Amer, a senior Biomedical Engineering major from Beavercreek, Ohio, is here to speak about her experience in undergraduate research. Miami undergraduate students in all disciplines are conducting graduate-level cutting-edge research and are regularly published in academic journals. These high quality research experiences make students stronger candidates for post-graduation employment; for example, Miami students who graduate with a 3.2 GPA or higher have 20 percent greater chance of being admitted to medical school.

Christopher Mattress, a senior Middle Childhood Education major from Cincinnati, Ohio, will speak about the impact that your funding has for students from low-income families.