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**House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education Subcommittee Testimony
3-23-17**

On behalf of the Ohio Student Government Association (OSGA), I would like to thank Chair Perales, Ranking Minority Member Ramos, and members of the House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today on the higher education provisions of House Bill 49. My name is Landen Lama. I serve as Interim Chairman and Chief Executive Officer for the Ohio Student Government Association (OSGA), but more importantly I am a third year student at Ohio University pursuing a degree in Political Science with a certificate in War and Peace Studies. For those of you who are not familiar with the OSGA, it is a representative assembly of the elected student governments of public universities in Ohio, representing over 400,000 public university students statewide. Our purpose is to provide a forum to empower students, to advocate on their behalf, and to improve the student experience throughout the state of Ohio. I'm here today to express the concerns and ideas of these current students, in regards to the Governor's Budget.

Universities and institutions of higher learning serve a valuable public purpose in the state, and we greatly appreciate the focus of the committee on improving the ability of these institutions to attract, train, and retain the very brightest minds from across the nation - and across the globe - to the state of Ohio. I would like to take this opportunity to explore two provisions of the budget that we as collective body believe greatly affect students in regards to college affordability and degree readiness; the first being textbook affordability and the second being the State Share of Instruction (SSI).

H.B 49 prohibits state institutions of higher education from increasing in-state undergraduate instructional, general, and all other fees. The increase in tuition rates for non-guarantee students has been a great concern for all Ohioans and has remained a threat to our efforts in improving our workforce development. Affordability is the key factor in narrowing the gaps in meeting our human resource demands. The Ohio General Assembly, previously and continuously, has taken various efforts to minimize the financial burden on students when it comes to educational purposes. In that regard, OSGA extends its full support to keeping our tuition rates low.

I would like to point out that when discussing textbook affordability, my peers and I are not only concerned with the physical book but all of the electronic resources that we are required to be purchase to do homework assignments and quizzes. This may include services called PackBack, McGraw-Hill's Connect system and Pearson Learning systems, just to name a few. These are

unnecessary charges on student accounts when universities like Ohio University already have free services that do the very thing we have to pay an additional \$50 to \$100 on.

With that being said, the OSGA, our member institutions, and the 400,000 + students we represent have real concerns about the textbook affordability provisions that are outlined in H.B 49. As it stands right now the provisions states that \$600.00 annually would be set aside for textbook prices. \$300.00 of that would be footed by public universities and the other \$300.00 would be tacked onto our tuition. In my very non-scientific data collection of how much students at Ohio University annually spend on books I have found the following results. A student pursuing a degree in Business can pay roughly \$1,000.00, a Political Science student can pay roughly \$600.00, a Pre-Medicine student can pay roughly \$500.00 and an education student can pay roughly \$300.00. Which is an average of \$600.00 a term.

While the face of this section promotes to lessen the burden of textbook costs to students, OSGA believes that it may have adverse impacts on individual students. After consulting with the elected student governments of public 4-year institutions in the state of Ohio, OSGA has strong reasons to believe that generalizing the national average may not be the suitable method to price course materials for a student population with diverse fields of study. The number of credit hours and the field of study may play a greater impact in determining a student's spending on college course material. Transferring the responsibility of providing textbooks from students to the board of trustees creates an ambiguity and limits the options for students to choose between buying, renting and sharing. Section 381.150 (B) does not clarify if the university sells the books to students or rents them. Selling the books for students would increase the total course material cost on a long run as the option for renting is limited, whereas renting the course materials to students does not account for downgraded value. This also increases the financial burden for students who normally spend below the national average.

Additionally, adding the financial responsibility to provide textbooks on the universities with only a 1% increase in state share for instruction would drastically affect the operational budget of our institutions. Depending on the enrollment numbers, the textbook budget for universities may vary and it would be almost impossible for the universities to bear this cost without affecting the budget that goes towards the out-of-classroom student experience. Over the past couple of weeks I've discussed with Ohio University Administrators the financial burden that will be placed on our university, and that number was estimated to be \$16,500,000. This 16.5 million dollar price tag doesn't include the logistical and administrative breakdown to be in order to implement this plan. Ohio University would either have to create a whole new department or repurpose a department to meet the needs of the university and the same can be said for other universities.

The implementation of H.B. 49 Section 381.150 (B), as introduced, reduces the financial burden for students but inadvertently creates a negative impact on the out-of-classroom experience for students by transferring the responsibility to provide textbooks from the students to the operating

budgets of the universities. For these reasons, OSGA requests the finance subcommittee on higher education remove section 381.150 (B) and (D) from H.B. 49.

OSGA requests the finance subcommittee on higher education to increase the state share for instruction considering the national and state inflation rates. It is important to keep the tuition rates as low as possible but it is equally important to provide adequate resources to students who enroll in institutions of higher education. Research suggests that by enrolling in an educational institution, students undergo multi-dimensional development processes such as academic and cognitive, attitude and values, psychological, career and economic, and quality of life. The growth in these areas are interdependent, so it is expected that college campuses provide a holistic student experience. As the educational institutions continue to prioritize towards student's academic and cognitive development, the skill gap continues to widen. Only 3 out top 10 skills desired by employers are related directly to academic knowledge. In order to strengthen our workforce, it is important for educational institutions and state governments to work in par with each other to close the skill gap. OSGA urges the State legislature to invest in Ohio higher education today. We urge the subcommittee on finance for higher education to recommend an increase in state share of instruction to match at least the national inflation rate.

OSGA's analysis of H.B. 49 Section 381. 150 is that the 1% increase in state share of instruction (SSI) and the added responsibility of providing textbooks to students from the operational budget of universities the subcommittee on finance for higher education is only adding to the current crisis by creating unintended negative consequences. OSGA sincerely hopes that both the committee and the state legislature understands the larger impact and sees the need to invest in higher education.

Member institutions of the OSGA believe that the in order for solutions to be made proper representation of student interests and feedback to the governing officials of institutions of higher learning is integral to the establishment of successful long-term decision-making processes. The current board of trustees model does not allow for the proper representation of these student interests and feedback because student trustees are not permitted to vote or attend executive sessions, with the exception of Ohio State University who has voting rights and others that allow admittance into executive session It is misleading and unjust to appoint students to university Boards of Trustees in the interest of providing proper representation of student interests and feedback while not granting them voting privileges or the opportunity to engage in discussions of executive sessions.

As the state seeks to keep universities accountable, affordable, and attractive to students from across the world, it is important to let these students have a say in the way that the university is being operated. More and more, public universities are being financed by tuition and fees paid by these students, so it is unconscionable to deny the students an essential seat at the table. We believe that if student trustees are brought into the decision earlier feedback would be great and once a vote is taken Board of Trustee members can rest easy knowing that they're also hearing the

collective voice of students. Over the years, the student voting rights agenda has gained a strong bipartisan support in the Ohio General Assembly. Student Trustee members are already contributing significantly to the institutions they serve. Granting them voting rights, and allowing them to express the student views at the executive session will bring more transparency to the system and also aid in bridging the age gap between college administrators and the average college student. OSGA believes that the 131st General Assembly reflected these views when creating the provisions stated above for the Ohio State University through H.B. 64. H.B. 49 of 132nd General Assembly, if enacted, amends sections of the Ohio Revised Code that would reduce the length of terms of non-student trustee members from nine to six years. Since H.B. 49 of 132nd Ohio General Assembly and H.B. 64 of 131st Ohio General Assembly are of same nature, and since H.B. 49 already proposes to amend certain sections of the Ohio Revised Code, we ask this Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education to append the text of H.B. 183 of 131st General Assembly to H.B. 49 of 132nd General Assembly. OSGA extends its full support to the legislative text of H.B. 183 of 131st General Assembly as reported by the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee.

OSGA and Student Governments across the state understand the difficult financial position facing the General Assembly. There is an unlimited demand for money and an acutely limited availability of the legislature to appropriate funds. Having said this, however, we strongly believe education is one of the strongest investments government can make, demonstrable by countless studies showing the far-reaching economic impact strong and decisive spending on education can have. The University System of Ohio is one of the largest and strongest public university systems in the nation, offering services through public four-year universities to hundreds of thousands of students. It boasts the largest university in North America. Our institutions of higher learning are respected for the relevance of their preparation, the quality of their instruction, and the abilities of their graduates.

As students, we stand ready to make this system stronger and more accessible, to open its doors to attract talent to Ohio because of its accessibility; to train the world-class talent we collect to be productive, engaged members of our state; and to retain them here to build businesses, employ other graduates, and further strengthen the system from which they benefited. We appreciate the willingness of this committee – and of the General Assembly as a whole – to work with us in achieving this vision.

Once again thank you, Chair Perales and members of the committee. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.