



Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors

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Testimony of John T. McNay, Ph.D.
Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors
Before the Senate Ways and Means Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 11, 2020

Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

My name is John McNay, and I am President of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The Ohio Conference AAUP represents over 6,000 faculty statewide. I am also a professor of history at the University of Cincinnati.

On behalf of my association, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 3.

There was a time when Ohioans could attend a public college or university in the state tuition-free. The Ohio General Assembly used to have a commitment to funding higher education, understanding that, in order to have a healthy democracy and economy, the state must have an educated, well-rounded citizenry. We need to return to the understanding that public higher education is a public good, not a burden.

However, now, on average, less than 15 percent of college and university funding is allocated by the state. The result has been skyrocketing tuition, leaving students with five- and six-figure debts for earning a bachelor's degree. The result also has been our institutions selling off state assets in exchange for long-term lease deals in which private companies now reap the benefits of taxpayer-funded investments.

The legislature should be discussing ways to increase state revenue to fund education at all levels, not legislation that could have the impact of hamstringing future general assemblies from responding to pressing needs. SJR 3 is incredibly short-sighted. This approach is terrible for all long-term investments. If this legislature is serious about more students earning degrees and improving Ohio's economic climate, it should reject this bill and focus on funding public services, including making higher education more affordable.

Taxation and spending should be like a thermostat – adjusting to changing conditions by moving up and down accordingly. The proposed supermajority approach in SJR 3 suggests the furnace cannot come back on unless the room temperature drops below zero – at which point the plants have died and the pipes have burst. We ask this committee to reject this resolution, which may seem politically expedient now, but could spell disaster later.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.