

**STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION FOR PROFESSIONAL
ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS
TESTIMONY
2022-2023 BIENNIAL OPERATING BUDGET
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
Amanda Uwague, Assistant Executive Director
April 22, 2021**

Chairman Gavarone and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the fiscal year 2022-2023 operating budget. I am Amanda Uwague, Assistant 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 and 3,500 firms, that 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. 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 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 Fiscal Year 2020

- The Board renewed 26,615 professional engineer and surveyor license applications for the 2020-2021 renewal period.
- Board staff reviewed 663 applications to take the NCEES Principles and Practice of Engineering or Surveying examinations.
- Board staff reviewed 652 applications for engineer intern [EI] or surveyor intern [SI] designation.
- Board staff reviewed and evaluated 787 applications for registration as professional engineers or surveyors by reciprocity.
- Board renewed 3,323 Certificates of Authorization applications for firms offering and providing engineering and/or surveying services in Ohio.
- The Board's investigative staff investigated 94 complaints during FY 2020 and has received 50 complaints to date in FY 2021.
- Due the procedures in place, the Board is usually able to process and approve completed applications for individuals and companies seeking licensure within 24-48 hours.

Board Priorities for FY 2022 and 2023

- Provide excellent customer service to the public, our licensees and applicants for licensure.
- Continue to provide timely processing and evaluation of licensure applications to ensure 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 also 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 (CSA), 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 e-licensing 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.

Per the Operating Budget Guidance for fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Board is requesting the full fiscal year 2021 appropriation with no increase. The Executive Budget proposal for the Board is \$1,312,259 for fiscal year 2022 and \$1,312,259 for Fiscal Year 2023, totaling \$2,624,518 for the biennium.

In the 2022-2023 biennium the Board expects several increases in its operating costs.

- The Board will see an increase in costs related to the eLicense database system. The eLicense database is the licensing system utilized by the Boards and Commissions and maintained by the Department of Administrative Services [DAS] Office of Information Technology. The operating costs of the system are shared by the agencies. The Board's share of this cost will increase from \$81,582 in FY 2021 to \$100,754 in FY 2022 and \$111,839 in FY 2023.

- The Board's rent will increase by 10%, an increase per year of almost \$7,500 in FY 2022 and \$9,200 in FY 2023.
- The Board's payroll costs will increase due to scheduled step increases and if there are increases in the cost of employee healthcare benefits.

The Board expects to offset these increases by utilizing savings resulting from savings in mailing and administrative costs since the Board no longer must mail notices for renewals, license approvals, CPD audits, exam approvals and requests for missing information as well as savings by limiting staff travel and limiting purchases of office equipment.

The Board believes that the funding recommendation proposed in the Executive Budget for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 will permit the Board to maintain 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. At this time I would like to answer any questions you have.