

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Transportation

Ohio Architects Board
and
Ohio Landscape Architects Board

Testimony regarding Budget Recommendations for FY 2024/2025
Shannon Himes, Executive Director
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Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation: My name is Shannon Himes, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Architects Board and Ohio Landscape Architects Board. I truly appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of the Boards' budget request for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. I also thank OBM Budget Analyst Stephen Reister and LSC Senior Budget Analyst Maggie West for their work on this request and the Redbook. The executive recommendation totals operating funds of \$667,469 for FY24 and \$667,469 for FY25, which is the projected minimal funding to allow both Boards to meet their obligations to enforce Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4703.

The Ohio Architects Board and Landscape Architects Board Overview

Although the Architects Board and the Landscape Architects Board are two separate regulatory bodies, they operate under one budget using the same administrative staff. Our full-time staff is small and streamlined, with an executive director, an investigator, and two administrative personnel. The Architects Board consists of five members, all licensed architects for at least ten years, who are appointed by the Governor for a five-year term. In the interest of increasing its diversity, the Board is seeking an amendment of Revised Code section 4703.01 to create a public member position and to reduce the number years of licensure from ten to five. The Landscape Architects Board also consists of five Governor-appointed members

also serving five-year terms, of which three are landscape architects, one is a related design professional, and one is a public member. The Boards are responsible for ensuring that Ohio architects and landscape architects meet the rigorous educational, experience, and ethical requirements of the profession to secure the integrity of structures and the built environment, thereby protecting the health, safety, and welfare of all Ohioans.

The practice of architecture and landscape architecture is diverse and complicated. Architects and landscape architects design and plan interior or exterior spaces, respectively, taking into consideration aesthetics, code requirements, safety and accessibility, functionality for the client, costs, and the natural environment. They are project managers, overseeing the entire construction project and communicating with and coordinating the efforts of construction crews, civil engineers, contractors, zoning and city officials, and each other. Their job is to turn ideas into reality and create spaces that are not only beautiful, safe, and functional, but serve the long-term needs of the public and the environment.

Given the comprehensive nature of their practices, architects and landscape architects must complete years of schooling, pass a rigorous examination covering all aspects of their profession, and log many experience hours before they can become licensed and practice in Ohio. This is true for architects and landscape architects nationally as well, as every state requires the licensure of architects and landscape architects.

Operational Overview

The Ohio Boards are responsible for licensing and registering approximately 9,400 architects, landscape architects, and firms. We ensure timely and appropriate licensure and license renewals, monitor compliance with continuing education requirements, investigate and enforce violations of our laws and code of ethics, and educate the licensees on the laws and rules which govern licensees and consumers on the services provided by the architects and landscape architects.

The Ohio Boards strive to be national leaders for architecture and landscape architecture regulation. Thanks to our partnerships with the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB), professionals seeking to do business in

Ohio can obtain a reciprocal license in mere days. This helps to create a truly portable license and removes time barriers for construction projects in Ohio. The Ohio Architects Board also eases the financial burden of licensure for student architects-in-training by offering a full reimbursement of their internship program fees, thereby facilitating an early path to licensure.

The Boards have demonstrated track records of ensuring excellent levels of customer service and public protection, and regularly seek to reduce costs and enhance operational efficiencies. Our fees have been largely unchanged over the past twenty years, and remain in line or lower than the licensing fees of other states for architects and landscape architects. While our revenue has in the past exceeded our expenditures, over the past 6 years the amount of that excess has decreased. The Board anticipates the need to raise fees slightly in the FY26-FY27 budget cycle for revenue to exceed expenditures.

Budget Proposal for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Biennium

The Boards are requesting \$667,469 in appropriation (all funds) for FY24 and the same amount for FY25, which is less than a 1% increase over the estimated operating costs for FY23. This funding amount remains low despite increasing personnel costs and rising costs of inflation for nearly all services, including payroll, banking fees, DAS fees, and audit fees. This is due to the restructuring of the Boards' license yearly fees and the absorption of those costs by DAS. This level of funding will allow the Boards to continue its current level of operation and will support the Boards' goals for the biennium to:

- Issue and renew licenses promptly, efficiently, and accurately.
- Conduct thorough and timely investigations and enforce violations of our laws.
- Review processes to increase efficiencies and reduce barriers to licensure.
- Educate the public on licensure and the role of the Boards.
- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of Ohio's citizens.

The Boards are completely self-supported through revenue generated from license applications and renewal fees, and revenues for FY24-25 are anticipated to continue to support these expenditures. Along with approximately 35 other boards and commissions, the Architects Board and Landscape Architects Board receives consolidated administrative, fiscal, and HR support from the Central Services

Agency, a division of OBM. We receive shared IT services from the Office of Information Technology. The Boards do not receive any funds from the State's General Revenue Fund. As required by Ohio Revised Code section 4734.54, all receipts of the Boards are deposited into the Occupational and Professional Licensing Fund (4K90).

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Ohio Architects Board's and Landscape Architects Board's executive budget proposal to you today. The Boards have an enormous responsibility to protect Ohioans and the built environment by ensuring the highest professional standards for Ohio's architects and landscape architects. Thank you for your consideration and continued support the Boards' regulatory missions. This concludes my prepared remarks and I welcome your questions and comments.