

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of Finance Committee of the Ohio Senate:

Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality, aka NOBLE, was formed in 2003 in response to Governor Taft's state budget cuts. Since then, NOBLE has been the bridge to connect northern Ohioans and our budget legislation. **This is Loh from Cleveland, Ohio.** As A NOBLE Steering Committee Member, Loh is glad to have this opportunity, together with some of our members from Cleveland and Akron, to come talk to you all directly about our lives and experiences impacted by various decisions made at the Ohio Statehouse.

Tax Dollars are Dollars from the Public, therefore, Public Dollars.

Public Dollars should Go Back To the Public by Paying Public Expenses!

Throughout, at least, the past 5 decades, the entire country has evolved, societal issues have been popping up, and the economy has gone through ups and downs making small dents and big holes in Ohio. All state legislators have started facing more of the unknown and various conflicting voices in order to make more complicated decisions than before. However, the said principle to make decisions on all legislation today, including how to spend Ohio Tax Dollars & what to spend Ohio Tax Dollars for, should also be **based on the best interests of the Majority of the Ohioans.**

Who are the majority of Ohioans nowadays? How have the majority of Ohioans been nowadays?

The majority of the Ohioans are the ones struggling through the recession in the last decade and due to the COVID-19 in the past 3 years! Why? Because the way how our tax dollars are re-distributed has NOT reflected the needs in reality for the majority of Ohioans for A long time!

Even though almost all the same services have been funded with Tax Dollars, the following practices make the funding **Defeat the Purpose:**

1. **Privatising Public Goods & Services to Worsen Accessibility and Equity:** The trend to fund infrastructures, projects/programmes, and services has been using Public Dollars to Pay for PRIVATE Choices which are NOT what the Majority of Ohioans have access to.
 - Still Funding vouchers for private and charter schools when public schools are Not Fully Properly Funded Yet and these private schools and charter schools are NOT held accountable for the same requirements and standards public schools uphold

- Asking ODOT to study using Ridesharing Vouchers, instead of Funding Public Transit directly or through various public services

2. **Assistance based on Eligibility / Qualifications vs Assistance based on Needs:**

When encountering Long-Term economic down-times, the funding decisions and the public policies of programmes and services which may be adequate for economic up-times just cannot provide the assistance in time to people in need. Instead, these hard-working Ohioans are left without assistance in time to fall down into bigger & deeper hardships which are actually Harder to get out of.

- NO prevention to keep Ohioans from economic hardships in the first place
- [COVID-19] Benefits Cliff
- Unmet Needs
- https://www.communitysolutions.com/leadership-district-fact-sheets-examining-stephens-house-district-93-and-huffmans-senate-district-12/?mc_cid=ee7160b7d2&mc_eid=d7f540408a

3. **Investing in Existing Population & Businesses vs Investing in Outside**

Opportunists: The trend to fund projects controlled by outside entities has also been taking the tax dollars generated by the existing population away from fulfilling the needs for the existing Ohioans to thrive. And just as with funding private and charter schools with public dollars, private businesses for profit have been favoured to receive public dollars when they have more means than enough to be on their own.

More Importantly, while asking the government to provide what they want continuously, they **neither contribute their share of taxes to Ohio nor are held accountable if they DON'T fulfill what they initially have promised!**

- Intel
- First Energy
- Professional Sports Teams
- <https://www.policymattersohio.org/press-room/2023/02/16/24-billionfor-what>

Technologies in medicine and science have advanced tremendously to continue bringing us more discoveries, as well as new issues. But, in our state budget legislation, we still do not find sufficient investment into the **Environment and Public Transit**. This is needed for not only this generation of Ohioans but also the generations to come so they can be a healthy, educated, and capable workforce contributing to the community and celebrating our lives in Ohio together!

1. Natural Habitats are becoming Waste Dumps from / for corporations to ruin soils for agriculture and our health, eg **East Palestine & Ashtabula**.

2. Pollution can be decreased with properly funded public transit for our health and the environment, in addition to the expenses to maintain roads and bridges, the waste of land use for parking spaces only, traffic congestion ... etc. At the same time, investments in public transit increase the accessibility and effectiveness of the investment in health & human services, public schools & higher education, housing & job opportunities, arts & culture ... while naturally stimulating our economy to build wealth for the majority of Ohioans can be increased.
3. <https://time.com/6255769/wales-roads-building-projects-climate-change/>

Thus, the so-called surplus many claim to exist does NOT actually exist. The **formulas to calculate all line items in our budget are outdated, not reflecting the current reality and needs**. However, if we do not catch up with the times, if we do not invest in our own people and businesses with properly funded public schools, health & human services, public transit, and the environment for equity, accessibility, and sustainability, Ohio will be pushed behind other states even further.

By this time, you may wonder, if the true budget we need is way bigger than the budget we have in front of us, Where to find the dollars to fund all the existing line items and new line items?

Here are some practical solutions good for immediate result to start:

<https://www.policymattersohio.org/files/research/proactivetaxplan.pdf>

1. An expansion of the personal income tax to 7.5% on incomes above \$250,000 and 8.99% on incomes above \$1 million.
2. A state-level corporate income tax at a rate of 8.5%, which corporations would pay if it were higher than their existing commercial activity tax.
3. Close the LLC Loophole by lowering the threshold to \$100,000.
4. A Refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) at a rate of 10% of the Federal Credit.
5. A thriving Families Tax Credit (FTC) of \$700 per child under the age of 18 for households with yearly incomes below \$65,000.

Please contact NOBLE with any questions you may have via (216) 505-1127. Thank you for being the guardians of the public dollars on our behalf, and thank you for listening to us, the Ohioans!