

**The Capitol Square Review and  
Advisory Board  
Operating Budget Request**

**FY 2024/2025**



**CAPITOL SQUARE  
REVIEW & ADVISORY  
BOARD**

# **BUDGET TESTIMONY**

*Ohio Senate – General Government Committee  
May 3, 2023*

## ***Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board***

**Laura P. Battocletti  
Executive Director**

Good afternoon, Chair Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the committee. I am Laura Battocletti, Executive Director of the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB).

The CSRAB was created in 1988 to renovate, operate, maintain, and preserve the historic character of the Capitol Square Complex (CSC), which comprises the Capitol building, Senate building, Atrium, grounds, and the underground parking garage. The operation of the complex is overseen by the 12 members of the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board.

The Board consists of four members representing the Ohio House of Representatives, four members representing the Ohio Senate, three members appointed by the Governor, and the Governor's Chief of Staff.

Much of the day-to-day responsibility of the CSRAB consists of caring for and maintaining the historic Capitol Square Complex (CSC). Maintenance and operational duties of the CSRAB range from routine and preventative maintenance, to larger-scale capital projects, all with the goal of protecting the historic integrity and functionality of the building.

In addition to maintaining and operating the Capitol Square Complex (CSC), the CSRAB is charged with educating visitors about the history of Ohio, including the state's political, economic, and social development, and the design and construction of the capitol building and its grounds. We place a strong emphasis on educational programming and have become part of the community fabric in Columbus, collaborating with other cultural institutions and state agencies to share Ohio's

history with the thousands of children and families that visit the Statehouse each year. The number of people who were recorded entering the building through security screenings, including Statehouse cardholders, was over 240,000.

Our diverse partnerships have provided the ability to continue free, family-friendly programming such as the annual holiday festival, Civil War encampment on the Statehouse lawn, performing arts presentations, and countless educational programs. Each year we commemorate the repose of President Abraham Lincoln in the Rotunda and display a 36-star Civil War flag that was flown over the Statehouse during his repose in 1863. We host an American Revolutionary War Living History Day with Battery A, a Civil War reenactment group commissioned by the CSRAB. The firing of the Statehouse cannons is a highlight of this event, bringing in school groups and history enthusiasts to the complex.

The Capitol Square Foundation is a key partner. Currently, the Foundation assists with the funding of our educational programs through public donations. The CSRAB continues to work with the Capitol Square Foundation to achieve our shared goal of having every school-aged child in Ohio visit the Statehouse before graduation. To this end, Honda provides transportation grants to school districts through the Foundation to offset the costs of field trips to the Statehouse.

Another shared goal of the CSRAB and the Capitol Square Foundation is to enrich the experience of schoolchildren, teachers, and all Ohioans visiting Capitol Square by investing in the Ohio Statehouse Museum. The Ohio Statehouse Museum's mission is to inspire the next generation of public servants who will lead our great state. The museum includes hands-on, interactive activities in an open environment. Along with educational tours provided by CSRAB staff and volunteers, the Museum is an integral part of our educational programming. The museum also offers countless opportunities to collaborate with K-12 schools, which we value greatly. One of the most recent collaborations with the Capitol Square Foundation and the Ohio History Connection yielded an upgrade to the museum that enabled the original 1802 and 1851 Ohio Constitutions to be on permanent public display at the Ohio Statehouse. Working together, this public-private partnership has produced an exhibit that is the first of its kind in the United States.

Our existing partnerships allow us to make the wisest use of our resources and ensure that the Statehouse is a place of learning for everyone.

CSRAB employees are proud to work on Capitol Square and serve the governor, legislature, and citizenry. Our 57 full-time and 3 part-time staff provide a wide range of services that are summarized below:

- **Administrative** – Oversees agency operations including finance, human resources and security.
- **Maintenance** – Ensures the operation and functionality of the building, including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, furniture repairs and relocating items in the Statehouse when required.
- **Grounds** – Maintains the landscaping, removes snow, and keeps the 6.5 acres of grounds litter-free. This department is also responsible for the repair, replacement and maintenance of the granite pavers, monuments, fountains, and flags on the grounds.
- **Custodial** – Cleans the combined 300,000 square feet of the Statehouse, Senate Building and Atrium. The majority of this work is accomplished in the evenings in an effort to respect the business of the legislature.
- **Communications** – Works with the various departments to promote the Statehouse to the general public.
- **Education** – Provides the free educational programs offered and oversees the dedicated volunteers who assist with leading the daily tours. This department is also responsible for exhibits and the acquisition and cataloguing of art and artifacts housed in the museum and throughout the Statehouse.
- **Special Events** – Schedules, coordinates, and breaks down the events that take place on Capitol Square. In CY22, over 300 events were held including weddings, press conferences, receptions, and rallies.
- **Museum Shop** – Operates a shop that offers Ohio made and Ohio themed merchandise.
- **Parking Garage** – Operates and maintains the 1,200 spaces, 2 penthouses, and numerous stairways in the parking garage that is open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The CSRAB operates under the following three major funds:

- **GRF** – Funding from the state used to operate and maintain the CSC.
- **2080** – Dedicated Purpose Fund/Underground Parking Garage Operations – Revenue from parking used to operate and maintain the Statehouse Parking Garage.
- **4S70** – Internal Service Activity/Statehouse Gift Shop/Events – Revenue from sales in the Statehouse Museum Shop and fees for special event activities support the operation of the Museum Shop and the Special Events Department.

The budget, as introduced, will have a new Operating Expenses line item, combining the Personal Services and the Maintenance and Equipment ALIs. This is consistent with other boards, commissions and most state agencies and will allow us to streamline our fiscal operations.

In 2017, we conducted a facility assessment of the Statehouse and a Structural Condition Survey Report of the Parking Garage, which together provided the Board a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the building. As a result, the Board was able to devise a long-term plan to address necessary repairs and general maintenance for the building and garage. More than \$45 million in projects were identified as needing to be addressed within the next 20 years, with \$31.1 million of those falling in the 0-5 year range. We were able to complete \$2.9 million of these projects under the FY18/19 and FY 20/21 budget. We continued progress in FY 22/23, replacing the cooling towers and the North light court elevator. The FY 23/24 Capital Budget included \$24 million for CSRAB to replace the remaining elevators, upgrade and/or replace the mechanical and electrical systems, install new audio equipment in the hearing rooms, upgrade the windows and doors, and make improvements to our security system.

Since my appointment to this board almost 7 years ago, one of my top goals has been to retain the vast institutional knowledge and experiences related to the operation and history of the CSC held by our employees. Of the 59 full-time employees, 18 (30%) are eligible to retire within 5 years. The majority of these employees are in critical positions and have served the CSRAB for 20 plus years. We are working on transferring these important skill sets through thoughtful succession planning. I also believe it is critically important to invest in staff and skilled tradespeople. We have

hired a painter, electrician, A/V specialist, and HVAC technician as other positions have opened up, saving us from outsourcing these jobs that can and should be done internally. This has all been accomplished under our current FY22/23 budget, and the request before you will allow us to continue this investment.

There is no doubt that the Statehouse and CSRAB employees have faced many challenges over this past year. The ability to hire qualified technicians and custodial staff is proving to be difficult. During the summer of 2022, we had only 3 custodians to clean the entire complex. Recognizing the inability to maintain the building at the highest standard, CSRAB partnered with Goodwill Industries Columbus to provide custodial services for the Senate Building, while CSRAB employees continue to clean the Statehouse and Atrium. It has also been challenging to find qualified individuals in our maintenance and grounds departments, although we are seeing signs of improvement based on the number of responses to our latest postings.

We continue to experience protests and civil unrest on the grounds of the Capitol Square Complex requiring significant response and, at times, significant repairs. Our relationship with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, which is tasked with providing security to the CSC, is based on a mutual respect for our shared, yet disparate roles. The bottom line is that all people who come to the Statehouse can do so knowing that all precautions are being taken to keep them safe. A security assessment was commissioned in 2021 and the final report was received in early 2022. The recommendations included additional surveillance cameras, access control, lighting, enhancements to the windows and doors, and changes to the landscaping. CSRAB received capital dollars to effectuate these changes

It has been 30 years since the renovation of the Ohio Statehouse, and just like in our homes, the complex's systems need to be upgraded or replaced. Again, thanks to the generosity of the Legislature and the Administration, and as mentioned above, CSRAB received \$24 million to replace the HVAC system, upgrade the electrical system, provide the security enhancements described above, enhance the audio/visual system in the committee rooms, and replace the elevators. Architect/Engineer contracts have been signed and we are currently in the design phase for these projects. The target completion dates for all projects is early 2025.

As with the systems, the furniture is also 30 years old and in need of replacement. Some of the fabric used for window treatments and upholstered furniture is fraying, torn, or dry-rotted. The blinds in the Senate offices and hearing rooms have broken mechanisms. The desks and credenza have definitely taken a toll over the years and office chairs are at a premium. Like with all other goods, the supply chain is exceptionally tight, often taking months for us to receive an order. Costs have doubled on certain items and the availability of other items is nonexistent as suppliers have gone out of business. I have asked for a proposal from one of our architects/interior designers to replace the furnishings in phases, allowing us to thoughtfully replace the furniture without unduly disrupting the tenants.

The House or Representatives increased our appropriation by \$1 million each fiscal year to help defray the increased costs of services and supplies.

In closing, we know that the key to keeping capital expenses down in the future is to be diligent in executing the proper preventative maintenance. The CSRAB will continue to spend appropriated funds in a prudent and efficient manner, while meeting its statutory obligation to maintain and preserve this beautiful and historic building.

On behalf of the Board, let me say how grateful we are for the State funding that you and your colleagues in the General Assembly provide to the CSRAB to maintain the CSC. These funds help ensure that the buildings and grounds are operational for the executive and legislative branches of state government and the people of Ohio – especially the tens of thousands of school children who visit the Statehouse each year.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the work of the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board.