



**Ohio Senate Government Oversight Committee
June 26, 2024
Testimony on House Bill 257
Gordon Gatien, Director, External Relations**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, my name is Gordon Gatien, Director, External Relations for the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS). Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of OPERS, the largest state retirement system in Ohio and a fiduciary to over one million members, retirees, and their beneficiaries.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 257.

We are thankful that the sponsors listened to our request for such legislation and acted accordingly, bringing consistency across all Ohio's public retirement systems.

While virtual attendance at board meetings was not previously a priority, allow me to share with you an actual example of why this bill heightened our awareness about its importance. In 2022, OPERS was asked to call a special meeting to address litigation against a company in which OPERS held large amounts of stock. This meeting was asked to be scheduled the day after the monthly Board meeting occurred. Subsequently, the meeting was scheduled for two days later. OPERS was ultimately named the lead plaintiff; however, had HB 257 been in effect at that time, we could have called a quorum of members without requiring trustees from Cleveland, Toledo, and Dayton to travel to Columbus. Though we completed the essential work of the Board, H.B. 257 would have led to a much more efficient meeting, greater participation, and ultimately, more effective use of our trustees' time that they were otherwise spending driving. In addition, OPERS would not have incurred any cost that day related to travel reimbursement owed to those trustees.

The stated objectives of HB 257, according to the bill's sponsors – promoting "more participation within meetings" and having "as much input ... as possible" have essentially already been proven successful. OPERS has been streaming its Board meetings since 2020, and in many instances, individuals have been afforded the opportunity to participate from remote locations. Allowing trustees to participate through virtual means will fully complete the bill's goals.

For over a year, the State Teachers Retirement System has had the authority to allow trustees to attend board meetings virtually. In the interest of consistency and good government, we urge the passage of H.B. 257 so that OPERS and the other public systems may utilize similar authority.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today on H.B. 257.