



**Testimony of
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**Ohio House Education Committee
Governor DeWine's Executive Budget Proposal for the
Ohio Facilities Construction Commission
Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027**

February 18, 2025

Chairwoman Fowler-Arthur, Vice-Chairman Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, I am Joy Bledsoe, the Executive Director of the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 96, the main operating budget for FY 2026-2027, as it relates to the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC).

OFCC has a unique mission overseeing and helping to administer capital infrastructure projects supporting our local school districts, state agencies, and institutions of higher education, in support of Governor DeWine's administration and projects authorized by capital appropriations from the General Assembly. In addition, OFCC administers cultural and sports facilities grants ("community projects") to local government partners through capital appropriations. At any given time, OFCC is overseeing more than 300 projects in design and construction and close to \$5 billion in economic activity across the state. These projects not only support roughly 30,000 construction jobs, but will provide permanent jobs, safe and exceptional learning environments, and many venues that serve Ohioans daily, which all contribute to making Ohio the greatest state to live, work, play, and raise a family.

In FY 2026 and 2027, this budget proposal will provide for the continued level of service to our local and state partners with a modest increase in our two funding sources – the General Revenue Fund and our construction operations fund. Now, it is my pleasure to highlight some of the work our commission does to support our important mission.

State Public School Construction Programs:

First, I will focus on operating our state public school construction programs¹. These programs include state support for improvements to traditional public school facilities, as well as support for STEM and vocational public school facilities improvements across the state; and at \$600 million, these OFCC programs account for the most significant state capital investment from the last General Assembly. The main school facilities program of the commission is the Classroom Facilities Assistance Program, which operates through a state and local district funding partnership. Our agency operating budget supports this program as my team works with districts from planning through completion of projects. OFCC's dedicated staff assists districts to establish a master facilities plan for all district buildings, analyze and establish the overall cost to build or remodel buildings to meet the standards of 21st century learning, and finally serve as project managers for district clients bringing planned buildings into existence.

Our budget proposal also includes the necessary funding for technology and professional services that enable the OFCC to continue building modern learning environments for students under all of our facilities assistance programs. In addition to the traditional personnel expenses, the majority of our General Revenue funding request for this budget (almost 84% in FY 2026) consists of state debt service payments for the program.

As of January 2025, nearly two thirds of Ohio's K-12 school districts have completed or partially completed district construction projects through the Classroom Facilities Assistance Program (CFAP). There are currently 304 districts that have fully completed their master facilities plan, 69 districts in the planning phase, and an additional 40 in the active design or construction phase. An additional 42 districts are participating in the CFAP Expedited Local Partnership Program (ELLP), which allows districts to serve themselves with local funding and complete a portion of their master facilities plan, earning credit on their district projects prior to entering the CFAP program.

In the last biennium, OFCC made conditional offers to 18 traditional school districts under CFAP and two joint vocational school districts² under the similarly organized Vocational Facilities Assistance Program. We hope to meet or exceed that number of offers in the FY 2026-2027 biennium.

¹ These programs are authorized by Chapter 3318 of the Ohio Revised Code, governing state facilities assistance to schools. Primary programs include the Classroom Facilities Assistance Program (CFAP), the Vocational Facilities Assistance Program (VFAP), the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Facilities Assistance.

² Of those 18 offers for traditional districts 6 have been for state support of the districts' complete master plan, 12 have been for segments of a master plan, and of those 12 segments 3 have been for final segments to complete the district's plan.

OFCC Grant Programs:

OFCC also manages Cultural and Sports Facilities grants appropriated by the General Assembly, which includes museums, art education facilities, historical sites, sports venues, and many more infrastructure sites of historical and cultural significance. This includes the more than \$100 million allocated to more than 130 local cultural and sport facilities across the state in the last capital budget as well as those reauthorized from prior biennia. To date, in this biennium OFCC has administered 120 such grants valued at more than \$86 million across the state.

In the past couple of biennia, OFCC was also tasked with administering more than half a billion dollars in one-time federal ARPA³ funding for facilities improvement grant programs supporting school security upgrades and workforce infrastructure improvements across the state. The most significant of these programs was the Ohio School Safety Grant Program, which through our partnership with the Ohio School Safety Center within the Ohio Department of Public Safety awarded more than \$210 million of ARPA funds to more than 2,700 eligible public and non-public schools statewide to provide critical security enhancements to these schools. In addition, this fiscal year, in partnership with the Department of Administrative Services, the OFCC is administering a “MARCS in Schools” program providing the equipment and installation of Multi-Agency Radio Communications Systems (MARCS) in school buildings in 43 districts in areas identified with low MARCS connectivity.

With respect to workforce supports, OFCC has recently partnered with the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to award 35 grants through our Career-Technical Construction Program. This program distributed \$200 million of ARPA funds to expand and improve instructional spaces in districts to add an estimated 3,369 seats to programs that educate and train students in Ohio’s most in-demand job areas such as agriculture, healthcare, and public safety among many others. In addition, in FY 2025, OFCC administered a \$90 million ARPA funded grant program for Appalachian Community Innovation Centers. These grants were awarded to 11 districts in the Appalachian region to provide full-service centers for K-12 education, community health clinics, and support career development for adults in Appalachia.

State Agency Infrastructure Support:

The Commission also works closely with state agencies and institutions of higher education in the planning, renovation, and construction of projects supported by capital appropriations approved by the General Assembly. Similar to schools, OFCC assists state agencies in the development and implementation of master facilities plans to develop accurate, efficient, and cost-effective designs for infrastructure improvement projects. A significant amount of our work involves project administration services for capital projects costing

³ “American Rescue Plan Act”.

\$3 million or more. These services include procurement of professional services and public bidding, along with oversight of design and construction from groundbreaking through closeout of projects. OFCC staff work with agency owners to oversee the budget, schedule, and overall progress of a construction project. Currently, the OFCC team is assisting agencies with approximately 150 active construction projects representing more than \$2.7 billion in economic infrastructure improvements across the state.

Construction Process Reform:

I am also pleased to discuss a number of construction language changes reflected in this budget. Last spring Governor DeWine tasked OFCC with finding opportunities to gain efficiencies in the process and timing of construction projects. Our staff took this to heart and partnered with representatives from the contracting, subcontracting, and construction trades communities on language proposals presented in this bill that will shorten front-end procurement times, reduce duplication of efforts, increase efficiency in procurement, and streamline the construction process. As you will see, these proposals include modernizing and reducing time required for communicating notices and construction awards, reducing and distributing the administrative burden more evenly for retaining funds on projects, and adding flexibility to procurement as well as reducing schedule constraints in the Revised Code to allow projects to progress more efficiently from the award to groundbreaking phase. All of the language items presented by OFCC have a similar theme: efficiency. We are a continuous improvement agency and with that in mind, have identified opportunities for us to operate more collaboratively and effectively on behalf of our local and state partners across Ohio.

Conclusion:

We are thankful that construction continues to boom in this great state and are proud to recommend opportunities to improve our processes to meet the demands of the marketplace and increasingly expedient project deadlines. At OFCC, we take a lot of pride in the work we do and understand deeply the sense of place and community that building projects provide local communities across the state. We look forward to continuing our important work in support of our school and state agency partners and thank you for the opportunity to champion this work in support of our agency operations today.

Chairwoman Fowler-Arthur, Vice-Chairman Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of the OFCC budget proposal. It is an honor to represent the hard-working professionals at the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission and the service they provide to all of us each day. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.