



Sean Rhiney, Director, Government Relations, Xavier University
H. B. No. 96 Proponent Testimony
House Finance Committee
March 13, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Sean Rhiney, and I am testifying on behalf of Xavier University in support of several items being considered in HB 96 that support higher education in Ohio generally, and for the inclusion of Xavier's College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) in the proposed operating appropriations for the biennium ending FY 26-27.

Merit and Aid for Ohio Students

Xavier has called Ohio home for close to 200 years. As the institution has grown from its modest beginnings in downtown Cincinnati to our current campus that lies within the cities of Cincinnati and Norwood, we remain a proud member of Ohio's higher education institutions. Close to half of our undergraduate students hail from the state of Ohio, and we join our other institutional colleagues in attracting many out of state students who seek out our 95 undergraduate and graduate programs. We greatly appreciate the many ways the Legislature helps make education affordable through investments in merit scholarships and aid, and are supportive of several of these line items in the proposed budget for the Ohio Department of Higher Education, including: the *Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)*, *Choose Ohio First Scholarship*, and the *Governor's Merit Scholarship*.

Currently, students from 68 of Ohio's 88 counties combine Xavier scholarships with state-support and federal financial aid to attend Xavier University. This past year, 30 Xavier students from 12 Ohio counties were awarded the inaugural Governor's Merit Scholarship, and currently close to 330 students attend Xavier through the Choose Ohio First Scholarship. These critical investments from the State of Ohio ensure we retain the best and brightest students in Ohio who will ultimately meet our critical workforce needs. Further, by extending these benefits to families who may desire a faith-based college experience for their son or daughter, we ensure these talented students also remain in state for their undergraduate education.

State Politics Internship Program

Xavier has been a leader in experiential education in Southwest Ohio, tying theory to practice through high impact academic internships and vocational practica for students entering in-demand careers in nursing, teaching, computer science, psychology, and government, among many others. In 2011, the University founded our [State Politics Internship Program](#), which was renamed in 2016 in honor of Dr. Gene Beaupre. Dr. Beaupre, who served as chief of staff to three Cincinnati mayors, and as a professor and leader at Xavier for four decades, co-founded the State Politics Internship program to provide all students with the opportunity to learn firsthand about legislative service and government. Participating students serve a seven-week, full-time (35 hours/week) internship in the state capital working for a member of the state legislature, a state legislative committee or leadership office, or an executive agency.

These internships are unpaid, and most students incur housing and additional expenses to gain this valuable experience. The University has funded some of our neediest applicants through private fundraising, but the opportunity to defray costs through a direct stipend or credit will ensure more students can compete for future opportunities in government service. We would advocate for an allocation from *Item 235591, Co-op Internship program*, which would support paid internships for the Gene Beaupre State Politics Internship Program. **Please support HC 1466 to add \$25,000 per fiscal year for this program.**



College of Osteopathic Medicine – Medical Support

During last year's capital budget process, Xavier was the beneficiary of a one-time capital investment that allowed the University to break ground on Ohio's 8th medical school. On behalf of Xavier, we want to once again thank the House Finance Committee and our Southwest Ohio House Members for advancing this groundbreaking project for One Time Strategic Community Investment Funding. We view Xavier's COM as a true public project that will bring Ohio its first medical school in over 45 years.

As you know, Ohio has a clear and documented need for more physicians, especially primary care physicians. The state's medical education infrastructure does not produce enough physicians to meet current and future community health needs. As Ohio's physician workforce begins to age out, addressing the state's health workforce needs remains a clear priority. Xavier's COM graduates will help alleviate this critical need for physicians.

Last December, Xavier broke ground on a new facility that will welcome its first students in fall 2027. By 2029, our DO residents will continue their medical training through clinical experiences in Ohio. For many decades, the Legislature has prioritized investments in Ohio's public and private medical schools, recognizing that clinical training is a fundamental component in the education of future physicians. These investments also directly correlate with retaining future doctors in state. According to AACOM data, more than 73% of osteopathic physicians practice in the state where they do their residency training, with the number rising to 86% when they also attend medical school in the state.

To support future planning, we would support Xavier's College of Osteopathic Medicine to be included in *Category 5: Medical Support*, which provides support to Ohio's medical, dental, and veterinary education programs and bolsters Ohio's health industry. Xavier is currently in the national accreditation process, and we will seek state approval thereafter. As a result, **we are not seeking any funds for the current biennium (FY 26-27)**. However, to assist in our planning, **our request is to integrate Xavier's College of Osteopathic Medicine into Category 5 in this current budget process with no funding, and future medical and financial support conditional upon successful national accreditation and state approval** during this biennium, and subject to the terms and conditions inclusive of Ohio's other public and private medical schools. Thereafter, we intend to seek support in subsequent budgets starting with the FY 28-29 biennium in 2027.

Xavier University greatly appreciates the House's work on this budget bill and is grateful for these proposed investments in our students, our University and Southwest Ohio.

Very truly yours,

Sean L. Rhiney

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Director, Government Relations