

House Finance Committee
April 8, 2025
HB 96, State Operating Budget, Written Testimony
Madeline Patrick, School Psychology Graduate Student

Chairwoman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 96. I am Madeline Patrick, a resident of Eastlake and a graduate student in CSU's school psychology program. I am writing regarding the State Budget and provisions impacting school psychology. The Department of Education and Workforce's budget includes money to pay for the school psychology intern program. This money is under the Special Education Enhancements line item. The budget allocates \$3 million per year to the intern line item. We are requesting it be funded at \$4.3 million. This would allow for a salary of \$35,000 and 108 graduates per year, an increase from the current salary.

As a first-year graduate student, I currently hold 4 jobs to fund my education. This is difficult, but feasible, given my class schedule. However, once an intern, we are required to work full time under the assistance of a practicing school psychologist. Therefore, our university programs tell us not to hold a second job during our internship year. Moreover, part of the intern salary is usually diverted to pay for STRS and health insurance. Additionally, given the current increase in cost of living, many of us work additional jobs in order to make ends meet. Therefore, an increase in salary would help tremendously.

Currently, the state of Ohio continues to see a shortage of school psychologists and a stagnant, outdated salary is exacerbating the problem. Neighboring states, such as Michigan, offer higher intern salaries (e.g., \$45,000 salary). Though moving to a different state for internship could be more lucrative, I would like to give back to the state where I have been raised and educated. As interns, we provide a service to the district where we are placed. We implement academic and behavioral interventions that benefit the students and school in which we are placed. Therefore, increasing funding will only improve the education of school psychologists and the quality of supports and education that students in Ohio receive.

The paid internship is imperative for the recruitment, retention, and high-quality preparation of school psychologists. The services provided by interns increases the capacity of schools to address the academic, emotional, and behavioral health needs of students. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Madeline Patrick