



SCHOOL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF OHIO

300 E. BROAD ST., SUITE 100 • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3746
614-222-5853 • Toll-Free 800-878-5853 • www.ohsers.org

**Written Testimony Before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources
Committee
House Bill 96
School Employees Retirement System of Ohio
May 14, 2025**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on amendments to House Bill 96, the FY26/27 State Operating Budget.

As you know, SERS is a statewide defined benefit pension plan that provides retirement, disability, and survivor benefits to non-teaching employees of Ohio's public schools including vocational, technical, and community schools, and community colleges.

SERS members' positions range from bus drivers, custodians, administrative assistants, food service providers, and educational aides to treasurers and business administrators.

There are a few provisions within Amended Substitute House Bill 96 that are of concern to SERS.

Within the purview of your committee, our primary concern is a provision that defines state retirement systems as "state agencies" for the purpose of remote work policies.

Whether through other sections of the Revised Code, case law, and/or Attorney General opinions that exempts them, Ohio's public retirement systems are ***not*** considered state agencies.

SERS operates under the guidance of an independent board comprised of nine members: four elected by active employee members; two elected by retired members; and three appointed investment expert members. One investment expert is appointed by the Governor, one by the State Treasurer, and one by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. The SERS Board meets monthly, except in January and August.

All of the Board members take an oath of strict fiduciary responsibility to the system and its members.



SCHOOL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF OHIO

300 E. BROAD ST., SUITE 100 • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3746
614-222-5853 • Toll-Free 800-878-5853 • www.ohsers.org

Maintaining the Board's independence is of utmost importance, and preserving distinct lines of management and governance responsibilities is vital for SERS' Board and staff to fulfill their fiduciary duty. Ultimately that is what allows us to be successful at our mission in serving those who serve our schools.

Ohio's retirement systems are highly regulated by state and federal laws and regulations and are subject to the oversight of the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC).

In fact, the ORSC at its most recent meeting voted to recommend that this provision of HB 96 be amended to remove the inclusion of the state retirement systems in the definition of "state agency."

Therefore, we request an amendment to reflect that recommendation and maintain the independence of SERS and the other retirement systems.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Stensrud, Executive Director