

Testimony of Sabrina Estevez
Before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee
27 May 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Committee:

I am Sabrina Estevez. I am an upcoming third-year student at The Ohio State University majoring in international studies and political science. I have lived in Northeast Ohio for the better part of my life, I have attended public schools and institutions, and I find wealth in my community and its members through our interconnectedness and ability to thrive.

My communities and their ability to thrive, however, cannot be realized without an appropriate budget that works for all of us. Not the far and few, not those who rebuff public resources, not those with a narrow world view. I strongly urge this legislative body to move forward with state operating appropriations in a way that benefits all of their constituents; not just yourselves. It's the only way a community can truly thrive: through helping their neighbor, or in this case, fellow Ohioan.

I am a medicaid recipient. I receive salient grants from my university and the state of Ohio that make educational ends barely meet. I use my university's resources to the fullest, despite their need for improvement. I don't have it easy, but I am still abundantly grateful to be privileged enough to speak out about it in front of all of you today.

As I navigate higher education, I have found several flaws that have the ability to see amelioration through proper operating appropriations; but that cannot happen without the help of this legislature. I have had friends leave Ohio because of lack of support from their state, representatives, and university; I have seen those close to me drop out because costs of tuition are simply too high; and both myself and countless other university students have struggled to receive proper mental healthcare that is promised from their institutions – this is only exacerbated by the budget in front of all of us today.

And so, I urge this body to restore, in its entirety, Section 381.130 from Governor DeWine's proposed budget as introduced. It cannot be lost on this body that healthy students are not complete without a subsequent healthy mind – but our status quo budget denies both the Governor's wishes and students' cries across the state. We **have** to do better.

The budget passed by this General Assembly will be a defining moment of each of your times in office. Additionally, it will define the remainder of my undergraduate career in the state of Ohio along with **thousands** of others; it will determine whether Ohioans stay here or leave for better;

it will show solidarity or discordance between state bodies and our Governor. Now is the time to do the right thing.

I and so many others envision an Ohio where students and young people aren't just scraping by, but prospering; but this can only come with the appropriate budget.

Thank you.