



Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking member Hicks-Hudson and the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Douglas Berger, and I am President of the Secular Humanists of Lake Erie in Toledo and I giving testimony on House Bill 96 the proposed State Budget.

I speak on behalf of my members in Northwest Ohio, and we collectively oppose much of the proposed budget under consideration especially those that favor a particular religion or is needlessly using the budget to pass irrational religious beliefs into law or attack a marginalized group.

One objection is the continued **failure to properly fund public schools as required by Article VI, Section 2 of the Ohio constitution**. Not only have cuts to school funding been proposed but tax dollars are being proposed to be increased for vouchers to private schools. Since most private schools are religious, this also violates Article VI, Section 2 of the constitution. For decades, the legislature has ignored court decisions saying the state was violating the constitution over school funding. Not only do you want to give more money to private schools, but you have added no accountability for it and as taxpayers we highly object to that.

Due to slight of hand, vouchers may be technically legal, however the legislature is ignoring its duty for proper oversight of tax dollar spending by not requiring any oversight of private schools like that required of public-schools

Another **objection we have is using the budget proposal to force religious bigotry into law**. We object to the end-round of the normal law-making process to install items you know wouldn't be passed on its own or would be subject to a referendum and we are especially upset using the budget to install laws that are only based on religious bigotry and not public needs.

Specifically, we object to the **parts of the budget that attack the LGBTQA+ community**. There is no rational reason to put those attacks into a budget. It has nothing to do with funding state operations.

Adding that the state only **says there are two sexes and those can't be changed doesn't change the reality** that not all people are limited to only two sexes or to be fair you might have been confusing sex and gender - sex is biology and gender is a social construct. A state budget is not the place to make this determination. There simply is no need to use the budget process to take away the rights of a marginalized group simply because you think your religion calls for it.

We object to **slashing the state library fund and leaving the state library fund unfunded**. Public libraries like public schools are a common good and can help people better themselves and make them less of burden on the community. Restoring this funding will save money in the long term. We also feel subjecting the library funds to each budget cycle will be a way to punish libraries or to get retribution on libraries that upset political or religious conservatives.

We also object to the part in the budget that **mandates school districts release students 1 hour a week for bible class**. We object for much the same reasons as the LGBTQA+ attacks. Religious bigotry is not a rational basis for state law and the budget shouldn't be used to install that bigotry as law.

Zorach V Clauson (1952) said that details over released time is left up to the school districts. The legislature refused to put guardrails for the Released Time Religious Instruction law last session that was demanded by parents and school districts and now when some districts are doing what you failed to do you change the rules once again to favor the religious and are using the budget to do it.

We also disagree with the **false notion that tax cuts will generate more revenue** but that is for another time.

The main take away is we would like you to stop using the budget to fluff up, protect, establish, and favor certain religious beliefs. We ask that you restore library funding and the state library fund. We also demand you do your job and fund public schools more than private schools and start holding private schools to many of the same requirements that public schools are held to for spending tax dollars.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Berger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas Berger