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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Wendy Zhan, Director

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

To: Chair Manchester and Members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

From: Wendy Zhan, Director

Date: April 29, 2025

Subject: LSC FY 2026-FY 2027 budget proposal

Chair Manchester, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, I am Wendy Zhan, Director of the Legislative Service Commission (LSC). I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to present LSC's budget proposal for the next biennium.

I will start by briefly explaining our structure. Our governing body, the Legislative Service Commission, consists of 14 legislators, seven from the House and seven from the Senate. By law, the chair rotates between the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. Our budget group includes funding for three different legislative agencies – LSC, the Legislative Information Systems (LIS), and the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) – as well as several other legislative functions. The proposed funding levels for the upcoming biennium for LSC, LIS, and CIIC are largely held at their respective current fiscal year's funding level.

GRF appropriation line item 035321 covers the operating expenses of LSC. As a nonpartisan, central service agency for the General Assembly, LSC provides a comprehensive array of products and services. While I am sure you are already familiar with many of our products and services, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a few key LSC staff workload statistics. Let's start with the budget. For H.B. 33, the main operating budget of the 135th General Assembly, we drafted 8,770 amendments and completed 66.6% (5,839) of them within two days of the requests. In addition, we answered a total of 21,116 legislative bill and other amendment drafting, analysis, and research requests and completed 42.8% (9,035) of those requests within two days. During the last General Assembly, we also drafted 40,241 letters of commendation and honorary resolutions to assist members with constituent outreach.

We are proud of what we have accomplished. It takes people to develop and deliver all of the LSC's services and products, and in fact 95.5% of the LSC budget went to employee personnel costs last fiscal year. For the money, the legislature gets a staff of dedicated, experienced, highly trained, and educated employees. The LSC staff strives to provide quality services in a timely manner to meet the demands of individual General Assembly members and staff. We currently have about 145 staff. Since 2023, we have had ten retirements; together these ten individuals devoted a total of 343.5 years (34.4 years per individual on average) serving the General Assembly. We will need to fill a few vacancies once the busy budget season is over. As

the director, it is my top priority to search for, develop, and retain people with the talent, dedication, and experience needed to serve the General Assembly. All of us at LSC appreciate the support of the legislature and look forward to continuing to earn that support.

The Legislative Information Systems line item (035410) pays for the operating expenses of LIS. LIS provides computer networking, application development, telephone, and a variety of other information technology services to the House, the Senate, LSC, and several other legislative agencies. Kurt McDowell is the Director of LIS and is here with me today. Director McDowell's written testimony is part of our packet, and he is available to answer any questions you may have about his agency.

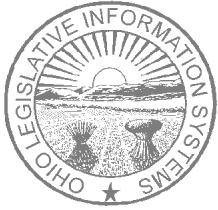
The Correctional Institution Inspection Committee line item (035405) covers the operating expenses of CIIC. Chris Albanese is the Director of CIIC and is also here today. Director Albanese's written testimony is also part of our packet, and he is also available to answer any questions you may have about his agency.

The Legislative Fellows line item (035402) pays the salaries and expenses for 24 participants in the Legislative Fellowship Program. Ten fellows are placed with the House, ten with the Senate, two with Ohio Government Telecommunications/The Ohio Channel, and two with LSC.

Finally, LSC is the fiscal agent and processes the payments for the remaining three line items. The Legislative Task Force on Redistricting line item (035407) is used to support legislative and Congressional district boundary drawing activities. The Litigation line item (035501) is used for the expenses of any lawsuit that might arise challenging state law and to which the General Assembly is a party. The National Associations line item (035409) pays the General Assembly's annual membership dues to belong to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the Council of State Governments (CSG), the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and three smaller organizations.

Chair Manchester and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration. Director McDowell, Director Albanese, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Attachments: LIS Director McDowell's written testimony
CIIC Director Albanese's written testimony



OHIO LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Date: April 29, 2025
To: Chair Manchester and Members of the Senate Government
Oversight and Reform Committee
From: Kurt McDowell, Director
Subject: LIS FY2026-2027 Budget Testimony

Chair Manchester and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, my name is Kurt McDowell, and I am the Director of Legislative Information Systems (LIS).

LIS serves the Ohio General Assembly and the legislative agencies. LIS is a non-partisan agency that consistently provides information technology, strategic direction and forward-thinking solutions that are vital to the smooth and efficient operation of Ohio's legislative processes serving the citizens of Ohio.

The LIS director functions as the General Assembly Chief Technical Officer (CTO). The CTO acts to improve cooperation, standards conformity, and security in all General Assembly IT organizations. Oversight of LIS is provided by the Senate Clerk, the House Clerk, and the LSC Director.

While the House, Senate, and LSC each have their own information technology organizations, we work closely and cooperatively with them. LIS also provides direct services that generally begin when requirements affect the entire General Assembly or an even larger community.

LIS operates the General Assembly, Senate, House, LSC, and Ohio Channel websites and is responsible for the design and support of key applications like the bill drafting and chamber systems. The State of Ohio Legislative Application Repository (SOLAR) system entails everything from the initial request that LSC draft a bill, through consideration and approval by both the House and Senate, to the preparation of an act for the presentation to the Governor. You are using a portion of the SOLAR system today if you are following the testimony on your iPad.

LIS is responsible for the Electronic Rule Filing (ERF) system, the Register of Ohio (ROO) website and applications, Rule Authoring Software (RAS), Rule Watch Ohio, the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code website, and the Cut Red Tape website.

LIS is responsible for the design and daily maintenance of the legislative telephone system, email system, file servers and other services used by the legislature. LIS works with vendors to deploy a cloud smart strategy. There are certain information technology functions that are more secure and better implemented in a cloud environment. LIS makes sure the requirements of the Legislature are considered before making technology decisions.

LIS also maintains computer desktop, server, network, telephone, and website support for other legislative agencies. These include Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC), Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB), Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR), Joint Legislative Ethics Committee (JLEC), Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC), Ohio Channel, and Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC).

While the responsibilities have increased over the 30 years that LIS has existed, LIS tries to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money. We have routinely kept our expenditures less than what is appropriated, and I believe this will continue into the next fiscal years.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION INSPECTION COMMITTEE

A Joint Committee of the 136th Ohio General Assembly

HOUSE MEMBERS

Mark Johnson, Vice Chair
Latyna Humphrey, Secretary
Jean Schmidt
Dani Isaacsohn



SENATE MEMBERS

Al Landis, Chair
Al Cutrona
Paula Hicks-Hudson
Kent Smith

House Development Committee

House Bill 96 Testimony

April 29, 2025

Chairman Manchester, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96.

Established in 1977, the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) is a bipartisan joint committee of the General Assembly that is required by code to inspect, evaluate, and report on Ohio's adult correctional facilities every biennium. The line item reflected in this budget requests an increase of \$50,000 in FY 2025 and an additional \$25,000 in FY 2026, which will allow the committee to maintain a staff of four so that CIIC members may be effectively assisted in fulfilling these statutory obligations.

During the 135th biennium, staff were able to complete inspections at 31 facilities, including 28 adult prisons operated by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and 3 juvenile correctional facilities operated by the Ohio Department of Youth Services, each year.

DRC and DYS were appropriated over \$2.5 billion by the legislature for FY 2025 in the Operating Budget of 2024. We operate as an important check and balance body of the State Legislature to ensure that both departments are meeting requirements laid out in the Ohio Revised Code and spending that money as the legislature intended. We also operate as an effective intermediary between the legislature and both departments. We offer an objective, facts-based approach to educate legislators on the state of correctional institutions and where there is room for improvement. This has allowed legislators to make informed decisions when it comes to policy that will impact those institutions.

Finally, another large part of committee staff work is to answer constituent concerns on behalf of members. In the 135th biennium, 3,393 concerns were received, a rate of over 9 per day, from 1,031 individuals incarcerated, family members, friends and constituents.

The slight increase of funding for the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee will allow for its staff to, not only fulfill, but exceed statutory duties in the upcoming biennium.

Thank you for your time,

Chris Albanese,
Executive Director