

Testimony of Sabrina Estevez
Prepared for the Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
15 March 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, 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 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.

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.

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

Today, I ask that this committee and the rest of the Ohio Senate decide to do the right thing for everyone. Increasing the Ohio College and Opportunity Grant won't just benefit college students; it will benefit the social and economic wealth of the entire state of Ohio. Additionally, healthy student bodies are not complete without a subsequent healthy mind; for that fact, I urge appropriations to be made to fund student mental health.

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

I am open to further communication and thank you for your time.