

BEFORE THE HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**REPRESENTATIVE CANDICE KELLER
CHAIR**

**TESTIMONY
OF
MIKE SUVER
VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF OHIO**

NOVEMBER 20, 2019

The Public Universities of Ohio

The University of Akron
University of Cincinnati
Miami University
Ohio University
Wright State University

Bowling Green State University
Cleveland State University
Northeast Ohio Medical University
Shawnee State University
Youngstown State University

Central State University
Kent State University
The Ohio State University
The University of Toledo

Chair Keller, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Minority Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the state's fourteen public universities, all of which are members of the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC). My name is Mike Suver and I am the Vice President of Government Relations for the IUC.

The IUC was established in 1939 as a voluntary educational association of Ohio's public universities. It is committed to ensuring affordable opportunities for the more than 329,000 students attending our member institutions without sacrificing the quality of their education or experience.

I am testifying today in support of House Bill 404, sponsored by Representatives Susan Manchester and Bride Sweeney. The IUC would like to thank Representative Manchester for her work in drafting this legislation and for offering state institutions of higher education an option that, by using existing and developing electronic communication technologies, will improve operational and administrative efficiency at the institution. We very much appreciate her outreach to us and her consideration of our perspective.

The bill would permit a board of trustees of a state institution of higher education, which includes both the state's public universities and community colleges, to adopt a policy allowing the trustees to attend a board meeting via means of electronic communication. It is permissive and does not mandate that an institution of higher education adopt an electronic communications policy for board meetings. The bill further stipulates that if a board does adopt such a policy, then it must incorporate in that policy several minimum standards governing the conduct of such a meeting. The board may add other additional standards or requirements to the policy as it determines necessary.

The minimum standards identified by the bill's sponsors are designed to uphold the integrity of board meetings at our institutions should they be conducted via electronic communication. Modeled after Purdue University's successful electronic communication policy, the bill identifies the following minimum standards that should be included in the board's policy:

- The number of regular meetings at which each trustee shall be present in person -- specifically that the trustee must attend no less than fifty percent of regular meetings in person annually;
- That one third of the trustees must be present in person at the meeting location;
- That all votes taken at the meeting are taken by roll call vote; and
- That a trustee who intends to attend a meeting via means of electronic communication notified the chairperson of that intent not less than forty-eight hours before the meeting, except in the case of a declared emergency.

Having the option to hold meetings via electronic communication means greater flexibility in how and when state universities could conduct board meetings. Enabling attendance via an electronic means of communication also could expand the applicant pool for trustees, allowing a greater number of highly qualified, dedicated individuals to be considered for service.

The definition of "electronic communication" as proposed by House Bill 404 is broad enough to allow for both audio and video conferencing. Technologies and software like Skype, Go-To Meeting, Zoom, PolyCom, and others allow for inter-active meetings where all parties can be seen, heard, and can actively participate. Documents can be uploaded, accessed, and used with ease and convenience. Videoconferencing is quickly becoming the new normal and its use will continue to grow in the future. In fact, the video conferencing market is currently predicted to grow 20% each year, which is expected to drive the industry's current worth of \$16 billion up to \$41 billion by 2022. According to a Forrester Consulting global study commissioned in 2018, in the United State alone, the number of video calls has grown rapidly – 68% of US companies saw an increase in

calls over the last two years, 30% stayed the same, while 2% decreased. The study also found that 43% of respondent companies made more than 2,000 video calls each month.

In the world of higher education, many states have already moved in this direction. As previously mentioned, the sponsors of House Bill 404 based this legislation on Purdue University's policy. The state of Texas has amended its Code to permit audio and video conferencing for meetings of Governing Boards of Institutions of Higher Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Board of Trustees at the University of Louisville in Kentucky has adopted bylaws permitting trustees to participate and vote via videoconference meetings. House Bill 404 appears to be in line with what other states are permitting and the direction technology is taking us.

Utilizing electronic communication, like audio or video conferencing, will enable Ohio's public university board of trustee members to participate in meetings when it might otherwise be impossible or make no sense. It will increase efficiencies, reduce costs, and grant flexibilities that we believe will improve productivity at our state institutions of higher education. Again, the IUC supports this legislation and, on behalf of Ohio's public universities, we respectfully ask for your favorable consideration.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.