



OHIO NEWS MEDIA ASSOCIATION | 1335 DUBLIN ROAD, SUITE 216-B | COLUMBUS OH 43215  
MONICA NIEPORTE, PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Honorable William P. Coley, II  
Chair, Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
Ohio Senate  
Ohio Statehouse  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Coley and Members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee—

On behalf of the members of the Ohio News Media Association (ONMA), I am writing today express support for House Bill 404, sponsored by State Representatives Manchester and Sweeney. I believe that this legislation promotes transparency while also providing opportunities for greater participation by our university and college trustees.

As you know, HB 404 would allow public institutions of higher education to adopt a policy for virtual participation in a Board of Trustees meetings with several safeguards—

- Trustees must attend at least half of all meetings in person;
- At least one-third (or more pursuant to policy) of trustees to be present in person;
- Roll call must be taken for all votes;
- Minimum of forty-eight hours notice must be given for virtual attendance.

These provisions ensure that the spirit and intent of Ohio's Open Meetings Act are preserved. I want to commend the bill sponsors for their thoughtful approach in drafting HB 404 and encourage your support.

During sponsor testimony on HB 404, members of this committee expressed an interest in using the bill as a vehicle to extend language originally contained in HB 197 which allows public bodies to meet virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. I encourage the General Assembly to extend this authority, which expires on December 1<sup>st</sup>. This has been very beneficial in terms of promoting transparency and public engagement during the pandemic.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Monica Nieporte  
President & Executive Director  
Ohio News Media Association

Cc: State Representative Susan Manchester  
State Representative Bride Rose Sweeney