



School for the Deaf  
State School for the Blind

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Lou Maynus, Superintendent, Ohio School for the Deaf and  
Ohio State School for the Blind



# Testimony on the Ohio School for the Deaf and Ohio State School for the Blind Budget Provisions of House Bill 110, the FY22-23 Biennial Budget

Ohio House of Representatives  
Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education  
Tracy Richardson, Chair

March 3, 2021  
Lou Maynus, Ed.D., Ed.S.  
Superintendent  
Ohio State School for the Blind and Ohio School for the Deaf

Chairman Richardson and members of the House of Representatives Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Ohio State School for the Blind and the Ohio School for the Deaf budget provision sections of House Bill 110, the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Biennial Budget. My name is Lou Maynus, this is my third year as superintendent for our schools.

Our residential deaf school has been in operation since 1829, serving deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as those with additional disabilities. Currently, we have 130 students on our campus located on Morse Road, north of downtown Columbus, with 29 students working remotely. Our students travel from all across Ohio, representing 134 school districts in 44 counties this school year.

Established in 1837, our residential blind school is known as the first public school for the blind in the United States and it is located adjacent to the deaf school. We currently serve 100 visually impaired and blind students on campus with 30 students working remotely. Our students travel from across Ohio and represent 112 districts in 52 counties this school year.

Our core mission at the blind school is to provide an individualized road map that develops the whole student. Our mission at the deaf school is to use a language rich environment to empower each student to become a contributing member of society. Our ultimate goals are to prepare our students in Ohio to learn, thrive and become productive citizens and as well as provide a continuum of support services for districts in Ohio.

Additionally, our statewide services program provides specialized information and technical support, resources, and comprehensive student evaluations to inform individualized education programs for school districts and families across the state. As part of statewide services, we serve 150 infants and toddlers ages 0-3 through our visually impaired early intervention program benefitting 180 local education agencies per year.

Governor DeWine's budget recommends operating budget appropriation for the Ohio School for the Deaf of \$14.9 million in FY22 and \$15.1 million in FY23. These numbers include General Revenue Fund growth of 6.5 percent in FY22 over FY21 and another 1.6 percent increase in FY23 over FY22. Governor DeWine's budget recommends operating budget appropriation for the Ohio State School for the Blind of \$14.3 million in FY22 and \$14.5 million in FY23. These numbers include a General

Revenue Fund growth of 4.0 percent in FY22 over FY21 and another 1.5 percent increase in FY23 over FY22. GRF appropriations are necessary to maintain service levels, as well as to support key priorities of each school's strategic plan which is aligned to the Ohio's strategic plan. GRF appropriations serve our blind, deaf, hard of hearing, and low vision students programming needs.

Please accept our sincere appreciation for the last biennium appropriation that allowed us to implement a plan for the integration of technology for our students in alignment with Governor DeWines culture of innovation. We had no idea at that time two years ago, that we were about to enter into the COVID-19 pandemic era. Literally, moments before the pandemic hit (hours before the statewide school closure took effect) our teachers, school staff and students were well-equipped with accessible technology for remote learning. Our staff and students engaged with the technology at high levels and became skilled very quickly – much faster than may have occurred otherwise due to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This access to technology was critical. What you did for us was a game changer. This access to technology provided our students with not only rich learning experiences in the virtual classrooms but also gave students a level of independence they had never experienced. Engagement with parents across the state is now at higher levels than ever with our purchased technology.

A second area of success has been our work around Social and Emotional Learning and interventions for students. The pandemic has caused an even great need for these

services. For example, we were able to provide mifis and mobile food distribution during a time when the need to serve the whole child was crucial.

Looking ahead, with the provisions in House Bill 110, we first intend to employ a data manager to work collaboratively with staff to identify and capture various data sources and outcomes, including student success, outreach services, and complex operations. Our data manager will develop strategies to monitor long-term system integration and leverage the State's Innovate Ohio Platform. This position will allow the schools to fully optimize data analysis to achieve the best outcomes for students with an efficient use of tax payer dollars.

Preparing our students for a successful life beyond high school is a top priority. Current rates of employment in the deaf community are at 40% and employment rates are at 25% for the blind and this is unacceptable. Pre-employment transition services (Pre-ets) for our school students is needed. These services assist students with disabilities by matching their interests and strengths with career fields, teaching workplace expectations and building self-advocacy skills. Second, it is our intention to hire a Pre-ETS teacher will include specific career education work for middle school students in grades 6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>. Finally, we intend to hire an educator who has specialized training in deafblindness. We continue to see more students who are deafblind and they have dual sensory needs beyond that of a deaf or blind child. Currently, we have 28 students who require such services.

These recommended increases included in the governor's budget will allow our schools to make stronger data-driven decisions and improve services to students. Please know you have an invitation to visit our campus for a tour of our facilities and to observe our students' learning. If you come visit, you will see our emerging state-of-the-art-digital environment. You will see what I call the necessary "bookends", a preschool with up-to-date innovative curriculum and passionate teachers and students engaged in relevant and individualized teaching and learning. You can visit our EDGE and 4-Plus programs that support post-high school students in job-training, interviewing skills, and self-advocacy for success in the work place. You will certainly want to visit students learning braille or reading their creative writing or students learning American Sign Language in ways such as self recording stories. You can watch students creating newsletters or doing equations with creative supports provided by their mathematics teachers. You might observe students practicing their athletics skills in the evenings (using COVID safety procedures). Our blind students can impress you with their swimming, track abilities or goal-ball maneuvers. You might see our nationally recognized soccer team practicing. Supported by youth leaders, you will see students learning to prepare evening meals and taking care of their needs in the dorms. If you visit on Coffee Shop Thursdays, our deaf plus students will serve you a cup of coffee or the blind school Panther's Den coffee shop may be a good choice. We promise your visit would be a memorable experience.

Thank you for your time and your work to serve. I am available to answer any questions you may have.