



School for the Deaf  
State School for the Blind

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Dr. Stephanie Siddens, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Dr. 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 XX, the FY24-25 Biennial Budget

Ohio House

Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education

Tracy M. Richardson, Chair

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Ohio School for the Deaf and Ohio State School for the Blind

Chairman Richardson, Vice Chair Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Biennial Budget recommendations for the Ohio School for the Deaf and the Ohio State School for the Blind. My name is Lou Maynus, 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 157 students on our campus located on Morse Road, north of downtown Columbus. Our students travel from all across Ohio, representing 68 school districts in 38 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 112 visually impaired and blind students on campus. Our students represent 67 districts in 27 counties throughout Ohio this school year.

Five years ago, we embarked on a journey of strengthening several specific areas that make Ohio's deaf and blind schools premier institutions of education: 1) Bold and innovative curriculum, 2) Strong "bookends"- early learning and post high school programming, and 3) a strong outreach program. Our additional priorities, over this biennium are on literacy, numeracy, and expanded core curriculum, workforce readiness, and serving more districts and students across Ohio through our statewide services.

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 workforce and career ready citizens. We also provide a continuum of support services for districts in Ohio.

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 currently serve 236 infants and toddlers ages 0-3 through our visually impaired early intervention program.

The DeWine-Husted budget recommends operating budget appropriation for our schools in the amount of \$33.35 Million in FY24 and \$33.74 Million in FY25. These numbers include General Revenue Fund growth of 8.1 percent in FY24 over FY23 and another 1.4 percent increase in FY25 over FY24. 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 our Governor's focus on supporting children and families.

The executive budget proposes a structural change to move to the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services which would maintain the Ohio School for the Deaf and the Ohio State School for the Blind as separate schools under one organization. This structure continues to support the unique instructional and environmental needs of our deaf and blind students while furthering a vision of cohesion and collaboration. We have expanded our commitment to shared services into afterschool programming, nursing, child nutrition, transportation and other administrative functions. We have worked to limit administrative costs and operations costs to put dollars closer to students and classrooms. This shared service model has shown success evidenced by increased partnerships and even more efficiencies across the schools directly impacting student services. Examples of such student supports include shared curriculum resources and trainings, one Business Advisory Council to support needs with innovative structures and scaffolding to ensure all our students will be gainfully employed, deafblind students are assured flexibility in services across campuses as appropriate based on individual need and centralized supports for districts and families. The restructuring into the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services continues to further these goals. The flexibility with funding provided under this model will allow us to better meet the fluctuating needs of our populations. Our unique services are best recognized, understood and utilized as one organization.

The recommended funding increases included in the DeWine-Husted budget will allow much needed assistance in the areas of teaching and learning. For example, it would support an additional high school teacher for each school, new curriculum materials and classroom instructional aides to help with individualized student needs. A nurse supervisor who serves both schools hired with COVID relief dollars will be able to continue to serve. This is particularly important given the continued increase in our medically complex student population. The funding would also enable the schools to lease a tour bus for the long trips to other state schools for our students who participate in athletics and other extracurricular events.

Please know you have an open invitation to visit our campuses 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 our 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 athletic skills in the evenings. Our blind students can impress you with their swimming, track abilities, goal-ball maneuvers and skills as the best blind band in the land. Our deaf students can show off their skills in soccer, basketball, and volleyball. 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.