



A budget for everyone Fiscal Years 2022-23

Promote transparency, protect democracy

Most Ohioans believe that our elected leaders should reflect our values and govern for all of us, no exceptions. But when data is not collected, laws are not scrutinized and facts are not reported and debated, it's difficult for us to hold our elected leaders accountable. The pandemic recession has brought the need for knowledge and analysis to the fore. Divisive national politics has filled the vacuum created by the loss of local news sources. Ohio lawmakers can help protect the health of our democracy by ensuring data is collected, outcomes analyzed and facts reported. That will allow Ohioans to gauge whether we're progressing toward an Ohio that works for everyone. Ohio lawmakers can use the 2022-23 budget to support independent journalism and establish dedicated processes and offices that will assemble, tabulate and report on areas of critical civic interest.

Hold the powerful accountable through local journalism

Recommendation: Boost support for public broadcasting by \$5 million a year

Agency: Broadcast Educational Media Commission

Line items: 935401, 935402

Newspapers are important threads in the fabric of Ohio's communities. They help government work better. But they have been hemorrhaging jobs amid corporate cutbacks, closures, mergers and consolidations. In 2018, Ohio had 32% fewer newspapers than it did in 2004, according to researchers at the University of North Carolina.¹ The number of people who report, edit, photograph and produce the news — those who work in newsroom jobs — fell from 2,870 in 2012 to 1,640 in 2018, a drop of approximately 42.9%.² This is a crisis that affects every Ohioan. While it demands national solutions, the state has a role to play. Indeed, Ohio long has supported public broadcasting through the state budget, including public radio's Statehouse News Bureau. The General Assembly should boost support for public broadcasting by \$5 million a year. Stations in areas that have lost traditional media could apply for funds, which like the existing funds could be administered through the Broadcast Educational Media Commission. State legislators also should follow the lead of their counterparts in New Jersey and support efforts to strengthen local journalism through collaboration with educational institutions and community organizations.

Ensure new laws put public health first

Recommendation: Require all bills undergo a health impact analysis

Agency: Ohio Legislative Service Commission and Ohio Department of Health

Line items: 035321, 035410 and various Department of Health lines

Ohioans are less healthy compared to people living in other states; the worst health outcomes afflict Black and brown Ohioans. State laws, funding and programming are powerful tools to improve health and access to health services while reducing health disparities across population groups. Representative Erica Crawley introduced House Bill 620 during the 133^d General Assembly to require the Legislative Service Commission to conduct a health impact analysis of legislative proposals. The bill would have created an interdisciplinary team within the Ohio Department of Health to coordinate among state agencies to address the “social determinants of health” — external factors that affect the health outcomes among different racial groups.³ The bill should be re-introduced in the new General Assembly and passed, with an appropriation to support expert staff and outside analysis as needed in the Ohio Legislative Service Commission and the Ohio Department of Health.

Follow the money on tax breaks

Recommendation: Scrutinize Ohio’s \$10 billion in tax breaks

Agency: Legislative Service Commission

Line items: 035321 and 035410

In 2016 the Ohio General Assembly unanimously passed a bill to create the Tax Expenditure Review Committee to scrutinize the \$10 billion Ohio spends annually in tax breaks. The scrutiny has been toothless; the committee does not have a staff. In fact, the committee didn’t even meet in this budget cycle, as prescribed by that popular but disregarded law.⁴ To make their vote more than an empty promise,⁵ lawmakers must fund LSC to staff and analyze the effectiveness of tax expenditures (which are greater on an annual basis than state money in the school formula funding and state dollars used for Medicaid in the General Revenue Fund).

Prioritize the health of Black, brown and Indigenous Ohioans

Recommendation: \$5 million in 2022, \$3 million a year thereafter, to fund an office of Minority Health Strike Force Accountability

Agency: Department of Health

The Minority Health Strike Force blueprint called for data collection and analysis to monitor progress on recommendations to improve the social determinants of health and quality of life for Black and brown Ohioans. If the governor is serious about ensuring Ohioans of all races can live healthy lives, then deep funding to operationalize and implement the blueprint is the required next step. Lawmakers should establish an office to develop the blueprint operations plan to implement at both the state and local levels. The 2022-23 budget should include funding to start this initiative with \$5 million in the first year and \$3 million a year thereafter, to maintain it. Start-up costs would include:

- \$1 million to develop a data system or application to collect ongoing information from state agencies, contractors, businesses and academic institutions to report progress on this work.
- \$2 million to hire at least four full-time employees to sustain this work. This would include a Data Analyst/Researcher 3 (data collection, processing, interpretation, data visualization); a Policy Specialist (with expertise in diversity/equity/inclusion); a Program Specialist trained in system science and program evaluation to measure change; and a Health Care Specialist to work with the health care system and organizations (e.g., Ohio Hospital Association) to address equity in health care issues.
- \$2 million in contracts (academic institutions, consulting firms) to develop frameworks and serve as independent evaluators.

Investigate injustice in sentencing

Recommendation: \$1 million for sentencing data collection

Agency: Judiciary/Supreme Court

The Minority Health Strikeforce decried the mass incarceration of Black Ohioans, but there is no uniform data collection on sentencing that could inform a solution. The Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, an affiliated office of the Supreme Court of Ohio, brings together broad and diverse membership to bridge the information gap among criminal justice system partners. Led by Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, state judges, and the legal community have identified key steps to move Ohio toward greater fairness and justice through uniform reporting to a centralized data platform.⁶ Estimated cost of moving forward in the 2022-23 biennium is \$1 million.⁷

Notes

- 1 Abernathy, P., "The Expanding News Desert" The Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media School of Media and Journalism University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2018. <http://bit.ly/2XVLvz9>.
- 2 Johnson, Caitlin et al., "Breaking news: Newspaper closures hurt Ohio communities," Policy Matters Ohio, July 30 2019, at <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/fair-economy/democracy-government/breaking-news-newspaper-closures-hurt-ohio-communities>
- 3 See House Bill 620 text and analysis at <https://bit.ly/3oWLYim>; see also an example of what a health note could do in Woodrum, Amanda, "Health Note: FY 2020-21 Workers' Compensation Budget (House Bill 80)," Policy Matters Ohio, 6/27/2019 at <https://bit.ly/3npEFjc>
- 4 Patton, Wendy, "Lawmakers should review, reduce some tax breaks before the sirens start," Policy Matters Ohio, March 31, 2020 at <https://bit.ly/37iPTQl>
- 5 Patton, Wendy, "Weak review: Tax Expenditure Review Committee should balance tax breaks against Ohio's needs," June 4, 2018 at <https://bit.ly/3mn4SgG>
- 6 Maloney, Kathleen, "Striving for Justice Through Data," Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, August 2020 at <http://www.courtnewsohio.gov/inDepth/2020/August/default.asp#.X9fbNWRKhAc>
- 7 E-mailed communication from Sarah Andrews, Ohio Criminal Justice Commission, to Wendy Patton, December 14, 2020.