



PRESS STATEMENT

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House budget leaves room for improvement Senate now has opportunity to prioritize everyday Ohioans

Today, Ohio's House of Representatives passed its version of the state budget for the next biennium. Policy Matters Ohio Executive Director Hannah Halbert released the following statement:

The budget bill passed by the House of Representatives creates more tax benefits for the wealthy and makes drastic cuts to some of the executive budget's most promising proposals, but does include bright spots for Ohioans.

As introduced, the House substitute bill [contained tax cuts](#) for the wealthy that do little or nothing for most Ohioans, with the majority (50.7%) of the tax benefit going to the richest 20% of Ohio earners who make more than \$124,000 per year. The version passed today includes those cuts and adds to the many loopholes littering our tax code in ways that benefit the wealthy even more. The result is another cut to our state budget, costing \$494 million in the next two state fiscal years (SFY). Local governments and libraries alone are estimated to lose up to \$17 million over that time.

The House gutted Gov. DeWine's promising budget proposal for higher education. Changes in the State Share of Instruction will not keep up with inflation, digging an even deeper hole for our public colleges and universities. Legislators opted to put college further out of reach for many Ohioans by dramatically cutting proposed support for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, the need-based funding source for students attending in-state colleges and universities.

Public schools fare better in the House's budget than in the governor's, in large part because the House used more current cost estimates when determining funding levels for the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP). But the decision to offer private school vouchers to households making up to 450% of the federal poverty level (more than \$111,000 a year for a family of three) is bad policy that uses public funding to pay private school tuition, in many cases for families that already send their kids to those schools, even without vouchers.

In a half-measure, the House increased the minimum salary for teachers by \$10,000 a year, though advocates recommend an increase of twice that amount. As it stands, the House proposal hopes to attract high-quality educators by offering salaries starting at \$40,000 a year. That is hardly enough to draw the number and quality of teachers we need to rebound from the ongoing shortage. Similarly, the House voted to phase in a pay increase for direct care workers, moving them to an \$18 average in the second half of the biennium. Workers, clients, and providers made the case for at least \$20 in order to restore and build a workforce, particularly in underserved areas.

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.

Some of the most critical workers were excluded from this version of the budget bill. House lawmakers chose to cut \$150 million that would have helped child care professionals and other critical care workers get the child care they need for their own children.

In other cases, the House budget puts our collective resources to very good use. House legislators helping Ohioans put food on the table by funding food banks at a rate of \$39.55 million per SFY. They did right by some families who need infant- and toddler-care, investing \$15 million per SFY in Appalachian communities and communities with high infant mortality rates. And they helped more families around the state afford preschool by adding an additional \$15 million per SFY to funds for Early Childhood Education grants. In total, the House-passed budget would help an estimated 15,000 more children get the child care they need and an estimated 15,000 more 3- and 4-year-old children will have an opportunity to get high-quality early childhood education.

These moves show that our representatives in the House have some sense of the good we can do when we put people first in our budget. That makes it all the more frustrating when they instead use our collective resources to pay for additional tax breaks for the wealthy.

If there were ever a time for Ohio to invest in people, this is it. Thanks to federal support, the state is in a strong financial position. We can begin to make up for decades of shortchanging our children, schools, workers, healthcare system and more. The House budget begins to make some of these investments. But too often, it falls short.

The Ohio Senate has an opportunity to improve the budget bill by [eliminating handouts to the wealthy](#), providing free school meals for all children in public schools and a minimum SNAP benefit of \$50 a month for older adults, and changing the tax code to support working-class families with the [Thriving Families Tax Credit](#). Doing so would make this truly a [people's budget](#) and set Ohio on a path to being the best state to learn, work, raise a family, and pursue happiness.