



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Policy Matters releases budget recommendations to improve life for Ohio families

Report tracks Ohio's performance in 15 metrics of family well-being

In his State of the State address last year, Gov. Mike DeWine said, "There's simply no better place to raise a family than Ohio." But across a majority of 15 indicators of family well-being, Policy Matters Ohio found that Ohio ranks about in the middle or near the bottom compared to all 50 states. As the governor prepares to unveil his 2024-2025 budget proposal, Policy Matters is recommending state budget policies that will improve the quality of life for children and families in Ohio.

Policy Matters gathered data from a variety of sources to measure Ohio's performance in four main areas: health and well-being, learning and growth, community and connection, and dignity and opportunity. In some metrics, Ohio performs particularly poorly. Ohio has the 42<sup>nd</sup> worst infant mortality rate and the 46<sup>th</sup> worst overdose death rate. Ohio ranks 47<sup>th</sup> for funding equity in K-12 education and 42<sup>nd</sup> for the share of unemployed people who are covered by unemployment benefits.

The analysis shows that Ohio overperforms the nation in several metrics – especially in the state's No. 3 ranking for per capita library resources. Ohio's public libraries are often important community centers where people come not only to borrow books, but attend enrichment classes, use the internet and more. Ohioans check out 16 resources per year -- twice the national average.

"Ohio has some of the best libraries in the nation. Our libraries are amazing resources for the community because the people pushed our elected officials to prioritize them," said lead report author, Budget Researcher Will Petrik. "Thousands of Ohio families are struggling to afford necessities, but the 2024-25 state budget gives us a great opportunity to come together and make life better for families of all backgrounds."

Over nearly two decades, Ohio lawmakers have passed budgets that send \$8 billion a year less to Ohio communities than they used to – choosing instead to give tax cuts and tax breaks to the wealthiest Ohioans and special interests. Policy Matters shows how by rewriting the tax code, lawmakers can leverage an additional \$3.6 billion in public resources to make child care more affordable for families, enroll more 4-year-olds in pre-school, fully fund K-12 schools in every zip code, make public higher education more affordable, help families keep food on the table and protect workers who are paid low wages. The report also recommends other policy changes that can be made through the state budget that will support Ohioans' health and security, such as expanding eligibility for Medicaid and food assistance.

"We have a lot of work to do to make Ohio a place where all families can thrive," Petrik said. "Through the state budget, we can lay the foundation for economic opportunity and shared prosperity. When we do, Ohio will live up to its promise and truly be the best state in the country for all families, no exceptions."