



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Caitlin Johnson
cjohnson@policymattersohio.org
216.502.7172

Organizations, officials, community leaders call on state lawmakers to pass a People's Budget

Today, Policy Matters Ohio and the Ohio Organizing Collaborative were joined by State Rep. Stephanie Howse and Portage County Treasurer Brad Cromes to call on state lawmakers to pass a 2022-23 state budget that cares for all people and communities, no exceptions. [View a recording of the press conference here.](#)

Gov. Mike DeWine's 2022-23 state budget proposal largely continues the failed policies of the last 15 years. The American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden will help us get back on our feet, but Ohio can't return to the failed trickle-down policies of the past two decades. The group put forward [All in For Ohio's People's Budget](#), which makes seven simple demands of our state lawmakers:

1. Quality Education
2. Safe Communities
3. Economic Dignity
4. Care for Caregivers
5. Stability For Our Families
6. A Working Health Care System
7. Funding Our Lives

"For 15 years the problem in the state of Ohio has been insufficient funding and too often policies that work against Ohioans," said Policy Matters Senior Project Director Wendy Patton. "The American Rescue Plan will help a lot. It shows us how government works best when it works for all people...It gives us a chance to reset and to start to rebuild. We need a commitment to a [state] budget that supports all people and a sustained effort for a better future."

The state budget can be used to address past and enduring harms created by racist policy choices that have resulted in higher infant and maternal mortality rates in the Black community, as well as COVID-19's disproportionate toll on communities of color.

"Declaring racism a public health crisis is needed now more than any time ever," said Rep. Howse. "By having a state government lead the way to show that we can be on the forefront, show what it can look like to lift up racial equity and social justice."

By rebalancing Ohio's upside-down tax code, Portage County Treasurer Brad Cromes said the People's Budget will be a game-changer for his community.

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

“Right now the poorest Ohioans on average pay nearly twice as much of their income in state and local taxes than the top 1 percent,” he said. “Our model in Ohio has meant over time more and more of our resources have gone to tax breaks for big corporations and fewer and fewer of our resources for people like my parents and families in Portage County.”

Ohio Student Association (OSA) organizer, Kalesha Scott of Dayton, addressed the need for a working health care system for all. Seven months pregnant, she has suffered two miscarriages and is terrified of losing her first baby. Doulas — trained professionals who offer support, guidance and protection for women before and after childbirth — are instrumental in lowering infant and maternal mortality rates but few women have the resources to afford them. Scott said she wants to see state lawmakers certify doulas so Medicaid can cover the service.

“A lot of times we can’t afford it,” she said. “We don’t have that extra \$2,000 to pay a doula.”

OSA organizer Akii Butler of Youngstown described the challenges he faced affording college at Kent State, especially paying back the loan he took from the university itself. Before his time as an organizer, Butler was working low-paying jobs at McDonalds and Subway right after graduation. He now owes more than \$30,000 in education debt and is putting his aspirations to go to grad school on hold.

“Education is always something that was seen in my family as a top priority, but what they didn’t prepare me for was the astronomical cost of that education,” he said. “By fairly and fully funding our schools we can eliminate education debt and unfair practices like the transcript trap. It would give all Ohioans a fair shot.”

Tia Ferguson is a teacher and parent in Columbus. She said she struggled to afford the basics while she pursued her graduate degree in early childhood education. As a Black woman and mother, she was also forced to return to work right away after going through a difficult birth and being on unpaid leave. The People’s Budget would provide resources for school districts and working parents that would provide more stability, safety and security for her and many other families across the state, she said.

“This pandemic showed us that we have a real opportunity to reimagine what Ohio should look like: An Ohio that is equitable to the humanity of all its citizens,” Ferguson said. “With that reimagining, it’s not enough to think about what that should be. It’s time to put that into action.”