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Ohio needs \$150 million more for student aid Higher education unaffordable to many Ohio students

Today Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education John Carey testifies before the House Finance Subcommittee for Education. Policy Matters Ohio is releasing a “Budget Bite” that examines Governor John Kasich’s plan to invest in student aid.

Although he expands eligibility to veterans enrolled at community colleges and branch campuses, the governor’s 2018-2019 underfunds the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) by \$150 million a year.

OCOG is the state’s only source for need-based financial aid. When policymakers created the grant, they intended the program’s budget to be \$250 million a year. It has never been fully funded. Underinvesting in higher education has consequences. Ohio ranks 45 of 50 states in college affordability. Since 2010, Ohio’s overall enrollment in public institutions dropped by 15.3 percent - more than any other state’s.

“It’s not just four-year institutions that are pricing people out,” said Policy Matters researcher Hannah Halbert. “Enrollment in community colleges and branch campuses dropped by 35 percent between 2010 and 2015. More than half of these students took out loans to afford their programs in 2013, up 12 percentage points from 2009.”

Halbert said OCOG could be fully funded by ending income tax cuts for the wealthiest and by closing some of Ohio’s \$9 billion in tax breaks.

“Ohio’s economy needs a well-trained and well-educated workforce,” she said. “We won’t get that if people can’t afford the education and training they need.”

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