

**HOUSE FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**HOUSE BILL 64 TESTIMONY OF**  
**Derrick Wyman**  
**Director of Strategic Initiatives, Walsh University**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, my name is Derrick Wyman and I serve as the Director of Strategic Initiatives at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio. I am the first in my family to graduate with a four year degree. I graduated in 2006 from Walsh University with a degree in Political Science and later pursuing and completing my MBA. I have lived and worked in Northeast Ohio my entire life.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss House Bill 64 with you today and specifically the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. I am joined today by a senior and upcoming graduate of Walsh University Marsean Ross. Marsean is a recipient of OCOG and will offer remarks on the importance of OCOG to him and his fellow students.

OCOG provides support to Ohio's need based students to attend a public or private college or university in Ohio. At Walsh University, 46 percent of our students are the first in their family to attend college and 30 percent are at or below the poverty level. At Walsh University over 485 students benefit from the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. Walsh University's operating budget last year was nearly \$74 million dollars. Of that \$74 million over \$23 million was provided in financial aid to our students.

Walsh University enrolls over 3,000 students primarily from Northeast Ohio and the Columbus area. Nearly 40% of our undergraduate students are majoring in the sciences including nursing, physical therapy, chemistry, biology/pre-med. In fact, the

University received its first National Science Foundation Grant to support chemistry majors in the summer of 2014.

The Ohio College Opportunity Grant provides important dollars to help students who are seeking a college degree with the anticipated outcome of securing a job and residing here in Northeast Ohio. The founding mission of Walsh University was to educate children from working class families. Today, that mission is a foundation for why we exist.

The Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), currently funded at \$41 million for all independent college students, allows Ohio's need-based students the choice to attend a private university. Combined with the commitments of generous institutional aid at our campuses, which is also integral to our missions, OCOG helps create the opportunity for these Ohio students and their families to afford a four-year private college education. Over 20,000 students receive OCOG to attend a private college or university.

However, the ability of Ohio's need-based students to use OCOG to attend the private school is in jeopardy. Since 2008, need-based, state funded financial aid for Ohio students has decreased by more than 50 percent. Eight years ago, OCOG recipients received \$5,000. This, combined with \$1,000 from the Ohio Student Choice Grant, greatly contributed to Ohio students staying in Ohio to attend college. Ohio's commitment to aid has greatly decreased over the years. Governor Ted Strickland's administration eliminated The Ohio Student Choice Grant entirely and cut OCOG almost 50% to just \$2,568 per student.

In this competitive environment, it is important to call attention to the aid surrounding states are offering to their students, all of whom are Ohio's competitors. Ohio ranks *next to last* in the amount of per student funding provided by our neighboring states. We trail New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia. The only state we beat is Michigan . . . of course.

We realize that we as an institution cannot rely solely on federal and state aid. That is why we are making every effort to increase our endowments and scholarship opportunities for our students by engaging our alumni base. Still the reality is that we need your help!

An increase in OCOG funding in this current budget cycle is necessary, not only to bolster Ohio's competitive advantage but to help our need-based students who are so integral to Ohio's future. All Ohio students deserve the opportunity to receive an affordable college education, whether they choose to attend a public or private institution. We commit that we are putting OCOG funding to good use and Ohio will only stand to benefit from this investment.

Consistent with the request of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, we ask that OCOG funding be increased in this biennial budget.

I am happy to answers any questions you may have.