

**OHIO GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE
REMARKS AS PREPARED
PRESS CONFERENCE FOR SIGNING
OF 2024-25 OPERATING BUDGET
CEREMONIAL STATEHOUSE OFFICE
JULY 5, 2023**

Very early in the morning of July 4th, I signed into law a budget that, like our first two budgets, invests in our people and in our families.

I thank the General Assembly for their work and shared commitment to providing greater opportunities for all Ohioans to live up to their God-given potential.

I want to thank Speaker Stephens, President Huffman, as well as all the members of the conference committee, House Finance Committee Chairman and bill sponsor Jay Edwards, and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Matt Dolan.

I want to start by talking about nursing homes.

AGING AND NURSING HOMES

With this budget, we are poised to make a profound impact on the lives of millions of older Ohioans -- especially those living in nursing homes.

In my State of the State address, I pledged to address pervasive issues in nursing homes. I said that “oftentimes, there are preventable tragedies caused by systemic problems in the nursing home, including poor infection prevention and control, medication errors, failure to provide care, and sometimes elder abuse.”

I promised at that time to appoint a task force to examine quality and accountability in our nursing homes -- which I did. That task force came back with meaningful and actionable recommendations.

In my State of the State speech, I also acknowledged the need for additional funds for the nursing homes. However, I made it clear that additional funds would be contingent on real reforms.

Through the work of the task force, and with the help of the General Assembly, the budget includes historic policy reforms and a substantial investment, designed to incentivize all nursing homes in Ohio to improve quality of care and quality of life for all residents.

The difference that these reforms will make will be real.

First, real oversight -- We are going to dramatically increase our inspection teams to have more trained professionals in nursing homes, making sure people are living with dignity in high quality and safe environments.

Real consequences -- Consistently bad nursing homes will face greater penalties, and those that refuse to improve will be put out of business.

Real rewards -- Expectations are a two-way street. If a nursing home takes care of its residents exceptionally well and is well-staffed, they will be rewarded with more funding.

Real resources -- We are providing nursing homes with the resources they need to hire the most qualified and compassionate people. We will also be providing technical assistance -- including education, mentoring, and measurement -- to improve the quality of clinical care that their staffs provide.

Real transparency -- For individuals and families searching for a nursing home, we are going to build an easy-to-navigate website that provides detailed information about every single Ohio nursing home, so families can make informed decisions on where to place their loved ones for care.

Real empowerment -- We are increasing the number of resident advocates so that **every** resident at **every** facility has someone in their corner to fight for their health, safety, welfare, and rights.

Finally, real control -- We are going to keep bad actors out of the nursing home business by exercising more control over who we allow to come into our state to care for our people. If you decide you want to run a nursing home in Ohio, you will need to demonstrate that you have the experience, the will, and the resources to take care of Ohioans at the high level of quality we expect.

When it comes to making life better for older Ohioans, we didn't stop with nursing homes.

Our budget also includes \$40 million to establish our all-new Healthy Aging Grants program, run out of the Department of Aging, to help people age gracefully in their homes, where many Ohioans would like to remain.

READING

In my State of the state speech, I called for “a renewed focus on literacy and the way we teach reading.”

Further, I asked the General Assembly for the resources to provide to our local schools so that “all Ohio children have access to curriculum that is aligned with the evidenced based approaches of the science of reading.”

The legislature in this budget gave us these resources.

EDUCATION

The Legislature has also given me a new responsibility in regard to primary and secondary education with the creation of a new cabinet-level agency: the Department of Education and Workforce. I accept this responsibility and take it very seriously.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

As I said in my past two State of the State addresses, it is my administration's goal to make behavioral health help visible, accessible, and effective in all communities in Ohio to fulfill the promises made decades ago.

- **We are fully funding 988 -- Ohio's suicide and crisis lifeline – to make sure every Ohioan has access to, and is aware of, this opportunity for help.**
- **And for families that have a child in crisis, we are making sure that they can get immediate help in their home and follow-up care after.**
- **Further, we are growing the number of pediatric mental health providers to reduce wait times for families.**
- **We will be able to bring youth with the most significant needs back to Ohio, to be cared for here, close to home and family.**
- **We're also increasing reimbursement rates for Ohio's behavioral health services to put that workforce on par with other healthcare professionals.**

- **This budget provides nearly 3,000 more adults with access to inpatient care.**
- **We are also increasing the availability of medications and other behavioral healthcare services in jails.**
- **And we're more than doubling recovery services to help people find healing and hope through peer support and employment.**
- **Finally, we will start investing in mental health innovation and research to kickstart strategies that will help more Ohioans get better outcomes and get them faster.**

Over the past four years, we've built the foundation, now we're doing the framing. We can see the shape it's starting to take, but we have a long way to go until its fully built.

HOUSING

As I said in my State of the State speech, in recent years, we have experienced lower rates of housing construction and low vacancy rates in rental properties. This has put a strain on our housing market, especially affecting Ohioans with low and moderate incomes.

We started a housing conversation last year in the waning days of the legislative session. And at that time, I pledged to the people of Ohio that we would address the issue of housing holistically. In this budget, we did just that.

- **We are addressing the housing needs of low-income families: For the first time in Ohio's history, we are creating low-income state tax credits to build thousands of new rental properties for families.**

- **We are addressing the housing needs of our growing workforce: For the first time, we are creating a tax credit to build single family homes, making home ownership affordable to families.**
- **We are revitalizing our neighborhoods: For the first time, with our landbanks, we will provide funding to buy, construct, and rehab housing to sustain their rich history and rejuvenate struggling communities.**
- **And we are helping Ohioans save for home ownership: The creation of the Home Owners Savings Accounts, in partnership with the Treasurer of State's office, will help Ohioans save money to cover the cost of down payments and needed repairs.**

In total, this provides \$750 million of new investment to support Ohio's housing needs.

CHILDREN'S INITIATIVES

This budget also again delivers for Ohio's children.

We understand that the first three years of a child's life are important, and so we are continuing our historic investments in children and families.

This budget expands access to quality childcare to more working families, allows us to serve more children and families with evidence-based home visiting services, provides Ohio's children services agencies with record funding to better serve kids in foster care, and makes critical investments in reducing maternal and infant mortality.

Further, for the first time in Ohio history, this budget establishes a dedicated department focused exclusively on children -- the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. Until now, the services

provided to Ohio kids have been scattered across departments, agencies, and offices. Everything this new department will do will place children at the center of it.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY

I also want to thank the General Assembly for appropriating money for the Imagination Library. Now, 58% of Ohio children from birth to age five are signed up to receive a new book every month.

CAREER TECH

For many students, the path to success is through one of Ohio's career and technical centers.

My wife, Fran, and I and the Lt. Governor visited virtually every career-tech center in Ohio.

Ohio businesses need skilled employees, and they need them now. At our career-tech centers, students are getting the skills and certifications needed to quickly fill these jobs.

This budget provides resources to expand career-tech programs and launch new ones, including a one-time infusion of \$200 million for facilities and \$100 million to purchase new equipment.

SCHOLARSHIPS

In my State of the State speech, I asked the General Assembly to expand the Ohio College Opportunity Grants, also known as OCOG, so that Ohio middle class students will be eligible for that assistance.

Further, I asked the Legislature to create a new merit scholarship for the top 5% of students in every graduating class in every high school in Ohio. And the Legislature did that.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we are very happy with this budget. It is one that makes historic investments in Ohioans and builds on Ohio's momentum. And, it builds on our efforts to make sure Ohio continues to be the heart of it all -- the best place to live, work, raise a family, and start a business.

Thank you. And now, let me introduce Lt. Governor Jon Husted.