



State Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney's Statehouse Update



Working for You

May 25, 2023

As your State Representative, I would like to take this opportunity to provide a brief update on current happenings at the Ohio Statehouse. This General Assembly is off to an interesting start. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of controversy or partisan battles, but I have worked to rise above it and bring people together when it comes to one of our most important duties: Passing a balanced budget that makes good use of Ohio's tax dollars.

We kicked off the new legislative term by electing a new Speaker of the House and **passing the most bipartisan transportation budget in recent memory, House Bill 23**. This legislation will help address the workforce shortage by connecting the workforce to the worksite. Just like access to childcare, access to reliable transportation isn't just a quality of life issue; it's a workforce issue. House Bill 23 appropriates \$100 million for public transit, including the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership to support workers traveling to job sites. **The largest jobs bill in our state's history, it also included billions to construct and maintain critical infrastructure, such as state roads, bridges, and highways.**

Rail Safety Reforms

In the wake of the East Palestine disaster, it is essential to work together at the federal, state, and local levels to protect our communities, shore-up public confidence, and prevent future catastrophes. The transportation budget enacted **new rail safety reforms for the first time in thirty years**. On behalf of the people of the 16th District who are particularly impacted by railway travel, I led the charge to implement these reforms. Safety reforms that include requiring two-person crews on trains, notifying the crew when there's an issue with a train, and coordinating with the Federal Railroad Administration to review the systems that detect defects on moving trains, such as the hot wheel bearings that failed in the East Palestine derailment. House Bill 23 also authorized a study of the transportation of hazardous materials so that we can better equip local communities that are on the frontline when disaster strikes. **I was proud to have been asked to attend this bill signing by our Governor and to speak to this historic budget.** It is the first regulation of track-side defect detectors in the nation.



The State Budget

Finalizing the state budget before July 1st is the largest task currently before us. Every two years, the General Assembly must pass an operating budget that provides for all state expenditures. The state budget supports everything from local governments and public libraries to school districts and long-term care facilities. As the Ranking Member of the House Finance Committee, I have a leadership role in balancing this year's \$95 billion dollar budget.

A few weeks ago, the House of Representatives truly put people first when it **passed one of the most consequential, bipartisan state budgets in Ohio's history**. By having an open, transparent process and not being afraid to listen and compromise, the House produced a balanced budget that will improve the lives of Ohioans for years to come. While the Senate still has to make its own changes, I want to share a few highlights from the House's version of the budget.

Education, Childcare, Healthcare

For three decades, the legislature has struggled and failed to overhaul the way that we fund our schools. When the state does not pay its fair share, it comes at a price; and that price is either paid by property owners or Ohio's children – and often it is both. Last budget cycle and for the first time in our history, we enacted a constitutional Fair School Funding Plan (my House Bill 1) that finally answered the question: "What does it really cost to educate a child in Ohio?" The House's budget includes a **\$1.3 billion-dollar commitment to public education**, the largest increase in history – all justified with specific Ohio data, studies, and best practices. This would help create a more even playing field for students and property taxpayers alike.

Quality education is essential to meeting the needs of our economy; I know that we have all heard about or experienced the workforce shortage and the difficulties of today's labor market. We cannot address the workforce shortage without **improving access to childcare**. The House's budget increases access to childcare and invests \$60 million to build up childcare capacity, strengthening our childcare workforce serving the youngest among us – those from zero to four.

In addition to childcare, the House's budget also **prioritizes long-term care** by increasing hourly rates from \$13/hour to \$18/hour for direct service providers, such as home healthcare workers. These are the workers who allow senior citizens to age in their homes, who afford independence to those with disabilities, and who care for those recovering at home from the hospital.

Standing up for our Communities

Ohio's counties, cities, and townships provide many of the basic services we rely upon daily. They are also key drivers of progress and economic development. I will continue **fighting to fully restore the Local Government Fund** to where it began so that our communities can put those dollars toward much-needed public services, such as our police and fire departments. Some other good provisions in the House budget include:

- \$500 M for Brownfields and Demolition projects.
- \$500 M for economic development through the All Ohio Future Fund.
- \$45 M for Next Generation 911, requiring counties to adopt more advanced countywide systems
- \$80 M for police and fire department grants.
- Increases the minimum teacher salary from \$30 K to \$40 K.
- \$24 M for school safety grant funding.



Putting People First

The House budget process showed us how politics is supposed to work: **It's not victories for Democrats, not victories for Republicans, but victories for every Ohioan**. As the Senate continues to make its changes, I look forward to continuing to work to put the people of Ohio first. I have recently been selected to serve as one of six lawmakers on the Conference Committee that decides the final version of the budget in June. If you have any feedback on the state budget or any of the bills pending before the General Assembly, please reach out anytime. I am honored to serve you and look forward to hearing from you soon.

All the best,

Bride

Bride Rose Sweeney
State Representative
Ohio's 16th House District

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Website](#)

Office Contact Information
Phone: (614) 466-3350
Fax: (614) 719-3910
Email: Rep16@ohiohouse.gov
Mail: 77 S. High St.-10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

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