

NORTHERN OHIOANS FOR BUDGET LEGISLATION EQUALITY
2022-23 State of Ohio Biennium Budget
NOBLE Platform

Prepared December 9, 2020

The following 2022-23 State of Ohio Biennium Budget Platform has been developed and approved by members of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). Over 40 individuals and organizations met in November of 2020 to discuss and draft this document. The Platform reflects the Budget areas of most concern to low-income Ohioans as they focus on issues of daily survival, employment, public education, public transportation, human services, and a strong local government. Issues that surround the passing of a solid Biennium Budget that meets the needs of all Ohioans in a fair and equitable manner include the State's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and how to raise the income to implement the 2022-23 Budget.

The gigantic negative economic impact of the Pandemic will surface in the Budget debate on issues of unemployment, rental/mortgage assistance, health care, utility assistance and others. In addition, how the State will address these line items as well as others will make proposals on closing tax loopholes, the income tax and other revenue sources much more critical as the State moves forward. It cannot be business as usual as the Budget is debated. Policy makers must be proactive as they respond to the pandemic while building the State's capacity to continue to meet the needs of its citizens in a just and equitable way.

Diana King and Diane Howard
Co-Chairs of NOBLE

REVENUE

1. Add a 10% refundable option to the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), while retaining the 30% non-refundable option. Thus, taxpayers could utilize whichever option benefitted them the most.
2. The state needs additional revenue generation for the purpose of investing in Ohio's workforce, families, community services and maintaining crucial state services. Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE) advocates revenue generation in any of the following ways:
 - Limit the business income deduction, sometimes known as the LLC Loophole, to \$100,000 and eliminate the special 3% tax rate on income over that amount.
 - The LLC Loophole, known as the business income deduction, is a tax break that allows owners of pass-through entities like limited liability companies to pay no state income tax on up to \$250,000 in business income.
 - There should be no reduction in income tax rates. We should reinstate the 7.5% tax rate for income over \$221,300.
 - Tax loopholes should be examined: Tax expenditures should have clearly identifiable purposes and expire if those objectives are not obtained.

- There should be a re-establishment of a corporate income tax, which was repealed in 2005; corporate taxes should be strengthened to restore balance between individuals/families and corporations.
 - The state should increase its severance tax on oil & gas companies so that it is comparable to other major producing states.
3. Oppose the attempt to end municipal income tax withholding by the original city of employment, as approved in 2020 in House Bill 197. If the General Assembly should approve legislation or a lawsuit should require this change, the state should make good on city revenue losses.

HOUSING

1. State lawmakers should allocate \$25 million annually for the “Housing Now for Homeless Families” program to quickly rehouse homeless children and provide much-needed stability.

TRANSPORTATION

1. \$150 million a year should be invested in public transit and related alternatives.
2. Incentives or tax breaks should be provided to employers who encourage their employees to ride public transportation to and from work.
3. Establishment of a multi-modal development fund within the ODOT budget with a dedicated funding source, whether that comes from issuing state bonds or from identifying a tax revenue base.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND

1. State revenue sharing through the local government fund should be restored to its previous level of 3.68% of state funds.
 - At the minimum there should be a permanent increase to the local government funding formula by 10% each year of the biennium.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A. TANF

TANF SURPLUS

The State should use TANF surplus funds for:

1. Reducing the number of cases per customer service representative.
2. Operating a fully functional Ohio Benefits Program.

CASH ASSISTANCE

1. Cash assistance should be extended to 5 years allowed by existing Federal law from 3 years.
2. Regarding exemptions, the state should create uniform procedures and training to reduce inconsistencies.
3. Funding should be increased to county departments of Job and Family Services to handle the increase in caseloads and to adequately provide services to consumers.

4. An increase in cash assistance to all eligible households by \$100/month to provide additional cash assistance to TANF families to help them meet their basic needs and afford additional pandemic-related expenses. The pandemic makes this even more critical.

ADDITIONAL TANF

1. Ohio lawmakers should reverse the mandate that counties individually bear the risk of federal penalty if they do not meet federal TANF work requirement ratios because of the regional disparity in economic conditions across the state. Instead, the state should balance the work requirement ratio on a statewide basis, and take responsibility for it, lifting the threat of penalty from the counties.
2. The state should adopt the recommendations in the recently released [Ohio Benefits User Experience Study](#).
 - For example:
 1. Improve the Ohio Benefits Self-Service Portal using human-centered design principles. Ohio policymakers and agency administrators should hold technology vendors accountable to usability standards to ensure Ohioans have access to a high-quality, mobile-friendly and user-friendly website and online application platform that includes the ability to submit pictures of required documents.
 3. Allocate \$50 million from Ohio's TANF funds for one-time emergency assistance through the Prevention, Retention, and Contingency program. This could provide one-time payments of \$500 to 100,000 families with immediate, emergency needs.

B. CHILDCARE

1. Eligibility for childcare assistance should be returned to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and it should be maintained for families who lose eligibility for one full year after it has been established to assure stability and continuous educational programming for children. The service should be maintained when parents are in between jobs or when mothers go on maternity leave.

C. KINSHIP CARE

1. To address the issue of equity in foster care payments, Kinship Care providers should receive allowances to adequately meet the needs of providing care for the children in their care; this includes food, shelter, transportation, childcare, and other necessities.

D. CARE FOR OLDER POPULATIONS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. The state should establish a match that draws down the maximum amount of dollars from the Older Americans Act in order to strengthen community based senior centers by increasing money allocations to local area offices on aging.
2. Funding for Adult Protective Services should be increased to \$22.75 million for each year of the Biennium Budget.

3. The state should make investments in independent living and vocational rehabilitation. This could be accomplished by increasing the General Revenue Fund to draw down the full available match.

E. HEALTHCARE & MEDICAID

1. Medicaid Expansion should be maintained at 138% of the Federal Poverty Level without qualifications.
2. Funding should be maintained for Ohio Free Clinics and federally qualified health centers.
3. Services and funding should be maintained for traditional Medicaid, excluding any mandatory work requirements.
4. Utilizing the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Department of Medicaid's lead hazard abatement model, the state should create a Primary Prevention of Child Lead Poisoning competitive grant program with \$29 million in SCHIP funding (\$9 million in current funding + \$20 million in new funding).
 - Access should be increased to effective lead screening and testing. The state should develop a quality improvement program targeting pediatricians in high-risk communities; this would allow for in office screening and referrals.
 - The state should strengthen the enforcement of current lead inspection laws with \$3 million in annual General Revenue Fund investment for the Ohio Department of Health to support lead investigations, case management and nursing.
5. The inclusion of over-the-counter medication and supplies through Medicaid Managed Care plans should be supported.
6. Medicaid optional services must be protected.

F. FOOD ASSISTANCE

1. Lawmakers must allocate \$45 million per year to deliver hunger and poverty relief to over 2 million Ohioans. This funding will help build capacity for local front-line hunger relief organizations and help families in need with food, personal care items and household cleaning supplies.

EDUCATION

1. Public education should be affordable and well-funded; funding should be in line with the DeRolph decision.
2. Tuition increases for state funded college/higher education should be frozen at a rate no higher than 2% for the duration of the budget.
3. There should be dedicated funding for the purpose of guaranteeing the availability of a licensed social worker at every public school in the state.