

Greenbook
LBO Analysis of Enacted Budget
Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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LBO Greenbook

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Quick look...

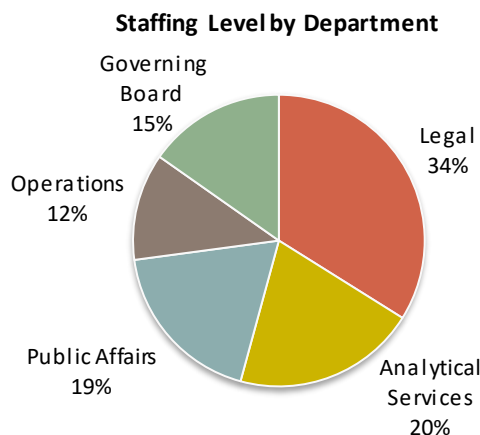
- Since the agency’s inception in 1976, the Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel (OCC) has served as the advocate for Ohio’s residential consumers before regulatory authorities.
- OCC is a self-supporting agency with no GRF appropriation. Funding for the agency’s one appropriation line item is derived through assessments to utilities and deposited into a dedicated purpose fund.
- OCC has 46 funded employee positions, in addition to the nine-member, bipartisan governing board. The staffing chart below contains additional detail about OCC job functions.

FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Appropriation	FY 2023 Appropriation
Fund 5F50 ALI 053601, Operating Expenses					
\$5,024,203	\$5,303,216	\$5,176,278	\$4,745,628	\$5,641,043	\$5,641,043
% change	5.6%	-2.4%	-8.3%	18.9%	0.0%

Agency overview

The Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel (OCC) is the statewide legal representative for Ohio’s residential consumers in matters related to their investor-owned electric, natural gas, telephone, and water services. The agency advocates for consumers in proceedings before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), federal regulatory agencies, appellate courts, and the Ohio General Assembly. Additionally, the agency monitors public utilities’ compliance with regulatory standards for consumer protection. OCC also educates consumers about utility issues that affect their bills and quality of service.

The Consumers’ Counsel is selected by a nine-member, bipartisan governing board representing family farmers, organized labor, and residential consumers. Each governing board member is appointed by the Ohio Attorney General to serve a three-year term.



Analysis of FY 2022-FY 2023 budget

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Council (OCC) operating costs are funded by a single DPF appropriation item 053601, Operating Expenses. The FY 2022 appropriation amount, just over \$5.6 million, is about \$895,000 (18.9%) greater than actual spending during FY 2021; the FY 2023 appropriation amount is the same as the FY 2022 amount. During budget deliberations, OCC anticipated challenges to continue its current level of consumer advocacy at this funding level.¹ OCC's operations are enabled by the agency's legal and technical expertise on utility issues.

OCC is funded through an assessment on the intrastate gross receipts of entities regulated by PUCO. Section 4911.18 of the Revised Code authorizes the annual assessment for OCC, and PUCO receives most of its operating funds from a similar assessment. The level of the annual assessment for each public utility company will vary based upon the number of public utilities, the amount of their intrastate gross revenues, and the amount of lapsed funds that are credited back to the utility companies. Any lapsed or unspent funds that were derived from the assessment supporting OCC are credited ratably back to the utility companies. The total amount of the assessments each year equals the amount of the appropriation in this line item for that year. According to OCC, the typical consumer in Ohio pays less than 3¢ for every \$100 in utility bill expenses for the services of OCC; this cost is equivalent to less than a dollar a year for a typical utility customer.

OCC allocates the majority of its budget for personal services, which provides the wages and benefits for its staff. Utility issues that impact consumers are complex and technical, so OCC employs a team of attorneys, financial analysts, and public affairs professionals who have requisite knowledge and expertise. Purchased personal services may be used to access independent contractors with whom OCC can consult on specialized issues. Much of OCC's public service is responsive to initiatives undertaken by utilities or regulators, so it is difficult to estimate in advance precisely how many expert consultants will be necessary.

OCC/lb

¹ The agency requested an additional \$700,000 in each fiscal year to hire more staff.