

# Redbook

## LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal

### Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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# LBO Redbook

## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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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 37 funded employee positions, in addition to the nine-member, bipartisan governing board.

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 5F50 ALI 053601, Operating Expenses</b>					
\$5,387,800	\$5,562,059	\$6,087,540	\$6,313,267	\$6,899,220	\$7,158,030
% change	3.2%	9.4%	3.7%	9.3%	3.8%

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### 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 2026-FY 2027 budget proposal

#### Overview

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Council (OCC) operating costs are funded by a single Dedicated Purpose Fund (DPF) appropriation item 053601, Operating Expenses. The executive budget recommends an increase of \$585,953 (9.3%) in FY 2026, compared to FY 2025 estimated expenditures. Recommended total funding in FY 2027 is \$258,810 (3.8%) more than the FY 2026 recommended total.

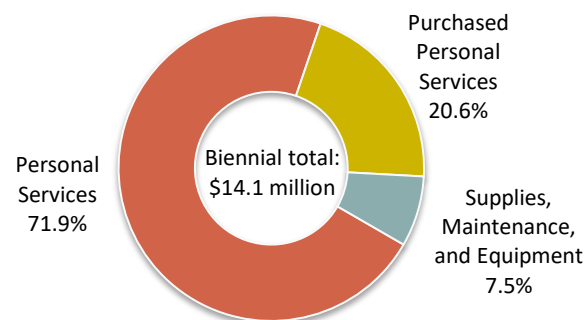
The agency requested \$8.3 million in FY 2026, which is \$1.4 million more than the increase proposed in the executive budget, and \$8.5 million in FY 2027, exceeding the executive budget proposal by \$1.3 million. According to the agency, this requested increase is to “support continued and increased advocacy and education for residential Ohio utility consumers.” The agency further remarked that “this increase is necessary to restore our purchasing power, which has steadily declined since 2012 due to inflation and static OCC budgets.<sup>1</sup> The requested funds will enable us to maintain adequate staffing and procure expert consultants and legal counsel, essential for representing consumers in complex matters where tens of millions of dollars in rate increases are being sought from utility consumers.”

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 or PUCO 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.

## Executive recommendations by expense category

The accompanying chart presents OCC’s recommended FY 2026-FY 2027 biennial budget by expense category. OCC allocates 72% of its budget for personal services, which provide 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. The next most prominent expense category is purchased personal services at 21%, which 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. Supplies, maintenance, and equipment represent less than 8% of total biennium funding. This category includes the agency’s information

OCC Budget by Expense Category  
FY 2026-FY 2027 Biennium



<sup>1</sup> As background, the amount appropriated for OCC in FY 2012 was 32% less than FY 2011 expenditures, and the budget bill (H.B. 153 of the 129<sup>th</sup> General Assembly) also repealed its authority to operate a telephone call center for consumer complaints.

technology equipment as well as interagency charges paid to the Department of Administrative Services' Office of Information Technology. OCC maintains an agency computer network, related applications, hardware, software, PCs, laptops, and website. Network files include many legal records that are privileged and confidential because they contain trade secret materials that are the property of utilities and related to various legal proceedings.