

# Redbook

## LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

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Attachment:

Appropriation Spreadsheet

# LBO Redbook

## Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

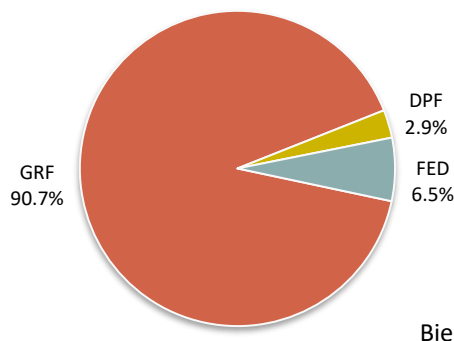
### Quick look...

- Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services (ODBES) oversees the Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD) and the Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB), which provide free educational and related services to students from birth through age 22 who are deaf or hearing impaired and those with visual, sensory, and developmental disabilities, respectively.
- Currently, 242 students are enrolled at the schools, with 105 of those students living on campus as part of the schools’ residential programs, and an additional 34 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers enrolled in ODBES’s early learning services (ELS) programs.
- Total budget recommendations: \$36.1 million for FY 2026 and \$36.9 million for FY 2027.
  - Sources of the budget: GRF (90.7%), federal grants (6.5%), and dedicated purpose funds (2.9%).
  - GRF recommended funding increases by 6.7% in FY 2026 and 2.3% in FY 2027.
  - Uses of the budget: 85.0% for personal services; 4.0% for purchased personal services; and 11.0% for supplies, maintenance, equipment, and other purposes.

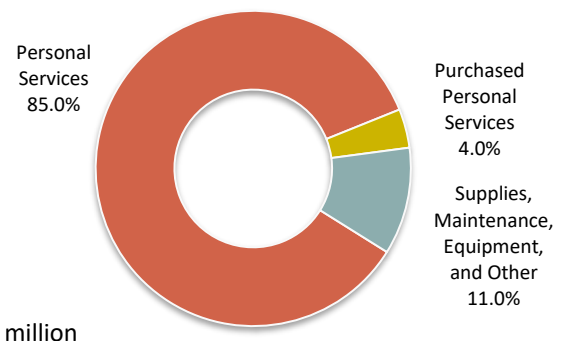
Fund Group	FY 2024 Actual*	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
General Revenue	\$29,859,052	\$30,634,000	\$32,700,258	\$33,454,668
Dedicated Purpose	\$591,207	\$1,000,608	\$1,042,467	\$1,053,141
Federal	\$1,631,666	\$1,961,709	\$2,362,500	\$2,362,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,081,925</b>	<b>\$33,596,317</b>	<b>\$36,105,225</b>	<b>\$36,870,309</b>
% change	--	4.7%	7.5%	2.1%
<i>GRF % change</i>	--	2.6%	6.7%	2.3%

\*The FY 2024 actual includes small amounts of funds spent that year from FY 2023 funds appropriated in previously separate OSD line items.

**Chart 1: ODBES Budget by Fund Group  
FY 2026-FY 2027 Biennium**



**Chart 2: ODBES Budget by Expense Category  
FY 2026-FY 2027 Biennium**



## Agency overview

Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services (ODBES) oversees the Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD) and the Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB), both located in Columbus. OSD is a state-supported public school and residential facility for deaf and hearing-impaired children from birth through age 22. Likewise, OSSB is a state-supported specialized educational and residential facility that provides free educational and related services to Ohio students from birth through age 22 with visual, sensory, and developmental disabilities. The schools were established in 1829 and 1837, respectively. Both schools operate under the control and supervision of the Department of Education and Workforce. Their educational programs must meet the same minimum state standards that apply to any other public school, including the state Operating Standards for Ohio Schools Serving Children with Disabilities. In the past, both schools have maintained additional accreditation with Cognia (formerly Advanced ED). They are currently working toward national accreditation through the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) and Association for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) by the summer of 2025.

Prior to FY 2024, OSD and OSSB were separate state agencies. H.B. 33 of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly established ODBES and placed OSD and OSSB under it. The move to a single state agency to oversee them culminated over a decade of efforts to consolidate resources in administrative and operations support in order to increase efficiency. Prior to the move, the two schools worked together to consolidate fiscal services, maintenance and custodial services, human resources, health care services, food services, security, and information technology services. Further, the two schools shared a superintendent since 2018. ODBES has allowed the schools to improve operational efficiency by reducing duplication of effort for human resources, fiscal services, information technology, and contracting. The shift to a single state agency has also provided additional flexibility to allocate staff, facilities, and other resources to best meet the needs of students.

## ODBES services

The services to hearing impaired and visually impaired students provided by the schools can be organized into four major areas: educational, residential, care and support teams, and statewide services.

### Educational program

Most of Ohio's school-aged children who are visually impaired or hearing impaired are educated in their resident school districts. Student placement decisions for OSD and OSSB are initiated by the parents and the student's school district of residence following an evaluation team report. The superintendent of the school district in which the student resides must request placement to OSD or OSSB in writing. Upon referral, a placement decision is made by the student's individualized education program (IEP) team, consisting of school district administration, OSD or OSSB administration, and parents. Currently, OSD and OSSB educate a total of 242 students, including 129 at OSD and 113 at OSSB. Enrollment ebbs and flows to some degree from year to year and within individual school years.

While all of the students are either visually impaired or hearing impaired, most have other disabilities or learning difficulties. Students are placed in educational programs based on the

needs identified by each student's evaluation team report and IEP. All students who are deaf are required to have at least one credit of American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is the key way students learn to communicate with each other and with teachers and staff. In addition, transition services are provided for students between 14 and 22 years old. OSSB also provides summer camp opportunities to students and hosts student teachers or interns to provide them with experience in educating visually impaired students.

ODBES's Early Learning Center (ELC) serves children with hearing loss from six weeks to five years of age and children ages three to five with visual impairments. The ELC provides services that aim to accelerate language and literacy development so that the children are able to fully participate in learning. Children attend the program at no cost to the parent. The ELC currently serves a total of 34 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Enrollment is limited by available staff resources and state law with respect to teacher to student ratios, which is one to eight for preschool special education classrooms. The ELC has the highest rating under the Step Up to Quality Program.

### **Residential program**

The residential program promotes the personal and social development of the students and helps prepare the students to live independently in the community after graduation. While all students participate in the residential program's activities, 105 students currently reside at the schools during the week and also participate in afterschool activities. Of the total, 70 reside at OSD and 35 reside at OSSB. Additional students, such as student athletes and those in secondary transition programs, may reside in the dorms on a part-time basis. For residential students, the students' resident districts provide transportation to the schools on Sunday afternoons and return to pick up the students on Friday after the school day is over.

### **Care and support teams**

The schools offer a number of services in an effort to provide additional care and support to students and their families, including additional academic and guidance support, social and emotional support, academic and career planning, and parent-to-parent support.

### **Statewide services**

In addition to the education and residential programs, ODBES operates a number of outreach and other statewide service programs that provide technical assistance, professional development, materials, and resources to families with children who are visually or hearing impaired and to the school districts that serve those children across the state. These services include:

- Student assessment services and early intervention services. For example, OSSB conducts onsite educational consultations with school teams and assessment clinics for students not enrolled at the school. OSSB also works with infants, toddlers, and families to prepare individual family service plans. In FY 2024, OSSB prepared these plans for 319 families. Services continue when a toddler becomes a preschool student and can transition to an IEP. OSSB received an average of 22 referrals per month for early intervention vision services that year;

- Educator outreach support – onsite, telephone, and email training support for regular and special education teachers serving children in preschool through grade 12;
- Professional development opportunities and consultations for teachers and IEP teams throughout the state, including for educators and families of preschool children;
- Direct student services – career opportunities through summer programming, online training, OSD’s 4PLUS Program, and OSSB’s Employment Development Growth Education (EDGE) Program. The latter two initiatives allow high school seniors that have completed curriculum requirements to defer graduation for additional education and transition services;
- Interpreting and ASL resources – professional development for interpreters of ASL who work in public schools and resources for families and professionals seeking to improve their ASL skills;
- Online ASL classes (currently, OSD provides these classes for 305 students across 18 school districts, an increase from 148 students during the 2023-2024 school year); and
- Parent mentoring to support parents of hearing or visually impaired students.

## Staff levels

As of February 2025, ODBES employed a total of 259 full-time and 16 part-time staff across its two schools, early learning services (ELS), statewide services and outreach (SSO), and central administrative office (CAO). CAO provides support to all the other service areas through administration, food service, maintenance, health care, security, and other areas. All of the academic teachers at the schools are certified as specialists in the field of visually impaired education or in the field of deaf education and have a concentration of college coursework in the subject matter they are assigned to teach. The table below breaks out ODBES’s employee headcount by service area and division.

ODBES Employee Headcount by Service Area and Division, February 2025						
Service Area	OSD	OSSB	ELS	SSO	CAO	Total
Educational	46	60	18	0	2	126
Residential	22	20	0	0	1	43
Care and support teams	6	9	1	0	0	16
Statewide services	0	0	0	16	0	16
Operations	0	0	0	0	74	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>275</b>

## Analysis of FY 2026-FY 2027 budget proposal

The executive budget recommendations for Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services (ODBES) total \$36.1 million in FY 2026 and \$36.9 million in FY 2027. The FY 2026 level represents a \$2.5 million (7.5%) increase from FY 2025 estimated spending of \$33.6 million. FY 2027 funding

increases by about \$765,100, or 2.1%. Of the \$73.0 million in total funding over the biennium, 90.7% comes from the GRF, 6.5% from federal funds, and 2.9% from dedicated purpose funds.

In this analysis, each appropriation item's actual expenditures for fiscal years 2022 through 2024, estimated expenditures for FY 2025, and recommended appropriations for FY 2026 and FY 2027 are listed in a table. Following the table, a narrative describes how the appropriation is used.

## Operations (ALI 226321)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>GRF ALI 226321, Operations</b>					
\$13,481,454	\$13,021,341	\$29,483,116	\$30,634,000	\$32,700,258	\$33,454,668
% change	-3.4%	126.4%	3.9%	6.7%	2.3%
<b>GRF ALI 221321, Operations (merged into ALI 226321 beginning in FY 2024)</b>					
\$14,625,843	\$14,265,231	\$375,936	\$0	\$0	\$0
% change	-2.5%	-97.4%	-100.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>					
\$28,107,297	\$27,286,571	\$29,859,052	\$30,634,000	\$32,700,258	\$33,454,668
% change	-2.9%	9.4%	2.6%	6.7%	2.3%

Item 226321 is ODBES's main source of support for all of its programs. It supports staff payroll and fringe benefits, maintenance of the school grounds and facilities, and equipment for OSD and OSSB. Prior to their move under a single state agency in FY 2024, OSD and OSSB used separate GRF line items for operations (ALIs 221321 and 226321, respectively).

Compared to FY 2025 estimated expenditures, the executive proposal increases GRF funding for school operations by \$2.1 million (6.7%) in FY 2026 and by an additional \$754,000 (2.3%) in FY 2027. The increases in funding recommended by the Governor primarily support payroll increases for existing staff. The proposed increases for this item also include \$100,000 in FY 2026 for OSSB to purchase a number of tactile tablet devices that will be used by blind and visually impaired students. These advanced devices cost \$16,000 to \$23,000 per unit, depending on the model, and are anticipated to significantly enhance literacy and math learning, as well as facilitate better instructional and testing processes. The Governor's proposal also includes \$10,000 in FY 2027 for their maintenance costs.

According to ODBES, the schools are facing cost pressures on several fronts. In addition to required payroll and benefit cost increases for its employees, ODBES noted sharply higher contract costs in recent years for individuals providing specialized instructional support, such as psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and occupational and physical therapists, due to a combination of labor shortages in those fields and an increase in the number of students with multiple disabilities that have greater need for specialized services. ODBES also expressed a need for cybersecurity expertise within the agency to help protect its information technology infrastructure.

## State Grants (ALIs 226602 and 226401)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 4H80 ALI 226602, Blind School State Grants</b>					
\$150,579	\$83,480	\$65,948	\$260,000	\$350,000	\$350,000
% change	-44.6%	-21.0%	294.2%	34.6%	0.0%
<b>Fund 4M10 ALI 226401, Deaf School State Grants (ALI 221602 prior to FY 2024)</b>					
\$51,908	\$153,522	\$140,382	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
% change	195.8%	-8.6%	-64.4%	-50.0%	0.0%

These funds are from a combination of funding from the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and other small grants. These grants vary in size and disbursement schedules. Generally, they are used for career-technical education, broadband connectivity, and parent mentoring and support groups.

## Educational Program Expenses (ALIs 226601 and 226400)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 4M50 ALI 226601, Blind School Educational Program Expenses</b>					
\$264,658	\$172,448	\$262,056	\$315,608	\$330,000	\$340,000
% change	-34.8%	52.0%	20.4%	4.6%	3.0%
<b>Fund 4M00 ALI 226400, Deaf School Educational Program Expenses (ALI 221601 prior to FY 2024)</b>					
\$52,819	\$87,838	\$102,225	\$300,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
% change	66.3%	16.4%	193.5%	-16.7%	0.0%

These funds come from revenues associated with OSD and OSSB fundraising activities, athletic ticket sales, vocational work programs, and donations. Funds may be used for school operating expenses, student activities, scholarships, food service programs, and student work experience programs.

## Early Childhood Education (ALI 226402)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 5H60 ALI 226402, Early Childhood Education (ALI 221609 prior to FY 2024)</b>					
\$0	\$0	\$120	\$53,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
% change	N/A	N/A	44,066.7%	22.6%	0.0%

This line item is used as a reserve for special projects or emergencies associated with early childhood education services. The ongoing revenue that supports this line item consists of a

minimal amount of fees collected for preschool summer day camps, generally under \$10,000 annually since FY 2017.

## Employee Food Service Charges (ALI 226622)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 5NJ0 ALI 226622, Employee Food Service Charges</b>					
\$7,169	\$10,411	\$20,476	\$22,000	\$22,467	\$23,141
% change	45.2%	96.7%	7.4%	2.1%	3.0%
<b>Fund 5NK0 ALI 221610, Food Service Program (merged into ALI 226622 beginning in FY 2024)</b>					
\$5,957	\$9,020	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
% change	51.4%	-100.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>					
\$13,127	\$19,431	\$20,476	\$22,000	\$22,467	\$23,141
% change	48.0%	5.4%	7.4%	2.1%	3.0%

This line item is used to offset a portion of the payroll costs for a kitchen manager position at the schools. Revenue received from staff purchases of meals at the schools funds this line item, in compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's regulations requiring the schools to separately account for the fees paid by staff for meals. Previously, OSD and OSSB used separate non-GRF line items for this purpose (ALIs 221610 and 226622, respectively). ALI 221610 was combined into ALI 226622 starting in FY 2024 to coincide with the move to a single state agency to oversee the schools.

## Federal Grants (ALIs 226626 and 226403)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 3100 ALI 226626, Blind School Federal Grants</b>					
\$968,449	\$890,966	\$963,274	\$1,061,679	\$1,099,000	\$1,099,000
% change	-8.0%	8.1%	10.2%	3.5%	0.0%
<b>Fund 3110 ALI 226403, Deaf School Federal Grants (ALI 221625 prior to FY 2024)</b>					
\$641,708	\$531,698	\$396,642	\$535,030	\$574,000	\$574,000
% change	-17.1%	-25.4%	34.9%	7.3%	0.0%

These funds are from a variety of federal grants passed through DEW or other state agencies. These include Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), preschool special education, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, and School Breakfast and School Lunch Program funding. The funds are used as specified in the federal grants for purposes that include special education and related services, child nutrition, afterschool programs that offer academic enrichment services, and other activities.



## Ohio Transition Collaborative (ALI 226621)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 3DT0 ALI 226621, Ohio Transition Collaborative</b>					
\$19,549	\$109,103	\$118,390	\$150,000	\$230,000	\$230,000
% change	458.1%	8.5%	26.7%	53.3%	0.0%

These federal funds are transferred from the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) agency and used to support OSSB's work as part of the Ohio Transition Collaborative. The Collaborative is a partnership between OSSB and other providers of services that help young adults who are blind or visually impaired transition into employment. OSSB staff and contractors use the funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services to special needs individuals during the summer months when school is not in session. The school receives reimbursement through OOD for the services provided. Revenue and expenditures vary depending on the number of students participating in the program in any given year. In 2024, 17 students participated in summer programming.

## Medicaid Professional Services Reimbursement (ALI 226643)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
<b>Fund 3P50 ALI 226643, Medicaid Professional Services Reimbursement</b>					
\$15,841	\$85,438	\$152,010	\$215,000	\$459,500	\$459,500
% change	439.3%	77.9%	41.4%	113.7%	0.0%
<b>Fund 3R00 ALI 221684, Medicaid Professional Services Reimbursement (merged into ALI 226643 beginning in FY 2024)</b>					
\$8,805	\$18,966	\$1,350	\$0	\$0	\$0
% change	115.4%	-92.9%	-100.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>					
\$24,646	\$104,404	\$153,360	\$215,000	\$459,500	\$459,500
% change	323.6%	46.9%	40.2%	113.7%	0.0%

This line item is used for the provision of qualifying specialized care, including speech therapy, audiology services, and occupational and physical therapy, for Medicaid-eligible students. The federal government reimburses qualified expenditures incurred by the school. Reimbursement fluctuations are based on services rendered and student eligibility for Medicaid. Prior to FY 2024, OSD and OSSB used separate non-GRF line items for Medicaid services (ALIs 221684 and 226643, respectively) but have since been combined into a single line item coinciding with the schools' move to a single state agency.

**FY 2026 - FY 2027 Appropriations - As Introduced  
All Fund Groups - Detail**

**Main Operating Appropriations Bill**

Detail by Agency			FY 2024	Estimate FY 2025	Introduced FY 2026	Introduced FY 2027	FY 2025 to FY 2026 % Change	FY 2026 to FY 2027 % Change
<b>OSB Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services</b>								
GRF	226321	Operations	\$29,483,116	\$30,634,000	\$32,700,258	\$33,454,668	6.74%	2.31%
<b>General Revenue Fund Subtotal</b>			<b>\$29,483,116</b>	<b>\$30,634,000</b>	<b>\$32,700,258</b>	<b>\$33,454,668</b>	<b>6.74%</b>	<b>2.31%</b>
4H80	226602	Blind School State Grants	\$65,948	\$260,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	34.62%	0.00%
4M00	226400	Deaf School Educational Program Expenses	\$94,563	\$300,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	-16.67%	0.00%
4M10	226401	Deaf School State Grants	\$110,775	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	-50.00%	0.00%
4M50	226601	Blind School Educational Program Expenses	\$262,056	\$315,608	\$330,000	\$340,000	4.56%	3.03%
5H60	226402	Early Childhood Education	\$120	\$53,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	22.64%	0.00%
5NJ0	226622	Employee Food Service Charges	\$20,476	\$22,000	\$22,467	\$23,141	2.12%	3.00%
<b>Dedicated Purpose Fund Group Subtotal</b>			<b>\$553,938</b>	<b>\$1,000,608</b>	<b>\$1,042,467</b>	<b>\$1,053,141</b>	<b>4.18%</b>	<b>1.02%</b>
3100	226626	Blind School Federal Grants	\$963,274	\$1,061,679	\$1,099,000	\$1,099,000	3.52%	0.00%
3110	226403	Deaf School Federal Grants	\$245,408	\$535,030	\$574,000	\$574,000	7.28%	0.00%
3DT0	226621	Ohio Transition Collaborative	\$118,390	\$150,000	\$230,000	\$230,000	53.33%	0.00%
3P50	226643	Medicaid Professional Services Reimbursement	\$152,010	\$215,000	\$459,500	\$459,500	113.72%	0.00%
<b>Federal Fund Group Subtotal</b>			<b>\$1,479,082</b>	<b>\$1,961,709</b>	<b>\$2,362,500</b>	<b>\$2,362,500</b>	<b>20.43%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>
<b>Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services Total</b>			<b>\$31,516,136</b>	<b>\$33,596,317</b>	<b>\$36,105,225</b>	<b>\$36,870,309</b>	<b>7.47%</b>	<b>2.12%</b>
<b>OSD Ohio School for the Deaf</b>								
GRF	221321	Operations	\$375,936	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A
<b>General Revenue Fund Subtotal</b>			<b>\$375,936</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
4M00	221601	Educational Program Expenses	\$7,662	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A
4M10	221602	Education Reform Grants	\$29,607	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A
<b>Dedicated Purpose Fund Group Subtotal</b>			<b>\$37,269</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
3110	221625	Federal Grants	\$151,234	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A

**FY 2026 - FY 2027 Appropriations - As Introduced  
All Fund Groups - Detail**

**Main Operating Appropriations Bill**

<b>Detail by Agency</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>Estimate FY 2025</b>	<b>Introduced FY 2026</b>	<b>Introduced FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2025 to FY 2026 % Change</b>	<b>FY 2026 to FY 2027 % Change</b>
<b>OSD Ohio School for the Deaf</b>						
3R00 221684 Medicaid Professional Services Reimbursement	\$1,350	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A
<b>Federal Fund Group Subtotal</b>	<b>\$152,584</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Ohio School for the Deaf Total</b>	<b>\$565,789</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Main Operating Appropriations Bill Total</b>	<b>\$32,081,925</b>	<b>\$33,596,317</b>	<b>\$36,105,225</b>	<b>\$36,870,309</b>	<b>7.47%</b>	<b>2.12%</b>