

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SENATOR CHRIS WIDENER, CHAIRMAN**

**FISCAL YEARS 2012 AND 2013 EXECUTIVE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
BY**

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OHIO BOARD OF DIETETICS**

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INTRODUCTION:

Chairman Widener and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Karen Dion. I am the Executive Secretary for the Ohio Board of Dietetics and am appearing before you today to seek the support of the Ohio Senate for the Fiscal Year 2012-2013 executive budget recommendation for the Ohio Board of Dietetics.

We are not requesting any additional appropriation or fee increases. This budget request includes the amendments by Ohio House of Representatives, for a total amount of \$686,381 for the biennium. The House's amendment will increase our FY12 budget request by \$8,000 and to decrease our FY13 budget request by an equal amount, resulting in no net change for the biennium. Program budget levels would be \$355,789 and \$330,592 for FY12 and FY13 respectively. The House Finance Subcommittee agreed that adjusting the appropriations will support the implementation of the on-line renewal application process in FY12 and will allow our agency to be more efficient and cost-effective.

The Ohio Board of Dietetics is one of the Professional and Occupational Licensing Boards authorized by the General Assembly. The purpose of the Board is to regulate the practice of nutrition and dietetics in order to protect the public from harmful, incompetent, or negligent nutritional practices.

The Board operates as a single program entity and is not funded by the GRF. Licensing fees generated by the Board are deposited into the Occupational and Professional Licensing Fund 4K9 – which serves as a repository for license fees and other assessments collected by the state's occupational and regulatory boards. The philosophy of the fund is that each agency must generate enough revenue to support their expenses, and that the pooling of funds collected by participants who have different renewal cycles provides for operational expenses for all those participating. Unexpended surpluses are maintained in the fund, and are commonly drawn upon to cover unforeseen expenses - like complex hearings, law suits that may result from disciplinary actions, unanticipated changes in the number of licenses issued, or to "seed" start up boards until their first round of fees are collected. The Office of Budget and Management has always held each agency strictly accountable for maintaining a positive position in the fund.

Current Situation:

Chapter 4759 of the Ohio Revised Code and Chapter 4759 of the Ohio Administrative Code created the five-member board, and mandates that the Board establishes educational, pre-professional training, and examination standards, and issues licenses and limited permits for dietitians who seek to practice in Ohio. Additionally, the Board is required to set standards of practice for dietitians, investigate complaints, hold administrative hearings, and determine appropriate disciplinary actions. The Board also monitors continuing education compliance of its licensees.

Three full-time employees manage day-to-day operations and the licensure, regulatory and disciplinary programs of the Board. The agency currently licenses over 3,473 dietitians, 56 limited permit holders, and 1040 licensees holding inactive licenses. During the current biennium funding has enabled the Board to meet its mission and goals by delivering high quality, timely services to licensees and the public - with consumer safety as its primary concern. During FY 2010 the Board investigated 91 complaints, entered into 1 consent agreement and issued 5 licenses with advisory letters. The Board did not have any disciplinary hearings nor did they issue any cease and desist letters or final adjudication orders. There were no licensees on probation during FY 2010.

The Board anticipates continued annual revenues of approximately \$355,000 generated from licensure fees. Good fiscal management and operational efficiency allows the Board to stay “self supporting” and to consistently maintain a positive balance in the Board's accounts within the 4K9 fund.

Challenges and Priorities for FY 2012-2013:

Challenges:

The practice environment for dietitians is impacted by the managed health care structure, economic pressures, increased public interest in alternative therapies and nutritional health, and the increases in nutrition related diseases. It is increasingly important for licensed dietitians, other health care providers, and the public to be knowledgeable about the sources of reliable nutrition information and dietetic services that impact their health. Dietitians must be held to standards that ensure high quality services and safety to persons whom they advise, and they must engage in practice that will improve the nutritional health of Ohio citizens. The public must be protected from unscrupulous dietitians and other unqualified practitioners who do not have a credible knowledge base from which to advise people about nutrition, or to treat medical conditions that benefit from modifications in diet.

The goals of the Ohio Board of Dietetics are to continue to provide high quality services to licensees and the public; protect the public from practitioners who do not meet minimum standards; improve communication and service; align with other licensing boards in order to remove barriers to practice for other licensed and qualified professionals; and develop and implement or participate in systems that will enhance the board's efficiency and effectiveness and reduce costs.

The challenge of funding day to day operational activities, including sufficient payroll, continues to be the largest fiscal challenge for the agency. Continued full funding, especially for payroll, support of IT services and the E-Licensing system is essential to the success of the Board. After the budget was submitted in November we were notified of an additional \$3,000 per year for network services, which was not originally budgeted for. The agency may need to forgo replacing one computer as originally budgeted for in order to have adequate funds for network services.

Setting Priorities:

The first priority of the Ohio Board of Dietetics continues to be the health and safety of the citizens of Ohio by regulating the practice of dietetics. Therefore, licensing, and enforcement activities continue to receive the greatest emphasis.

Secondly, the board will continue its efforts to monitor and react to any proposed legislation that would weaken the quality standards for persons who may practice nutrition and dietetics, and that would potentially harm Ohio citizens.

Thirdly, the Board intends to improve service activities and agency access through website enhancement, online license renewal service development, and credit card payment option implementation. This will be developed as resources permit.

Operational Changes:

The Ohio Board of Dietetics currently includes five board members, three FTE staff, and one intermittent part-time clerk to help with the annual renewal of licenses. Changes from FY 10-11 include the retirement of the previous executive secretary and a new executive secretary hired in March of 2010. No significant staffing changes are anticipated for FY 12-13. Absorbing the manual processing of renewal application fees (rather than paying for lock-box processing) and managing the jurisprudence educational requirements has increased the demands on all personnel in the agency. Implementation of lock-box services for revenue processing and deposits will be necessary for the implementation of on-line renewal. If on-line renewal is implemented by FY13, we anticipate a reduction in the Intermittant Clerk's hours, based on the decreased manpower needed to process paper applications and checks and money orders.

Conclusion:

The budget request presented by the Ohio Board of Dietetics reflects the minimum resources required in order to fulfill our mandate to license dietitians, regulate the profession, enforce the licensure law, and protect the nutritional health of the citizens of Ohio. Our proposed budget request takes into consideration the minimum payroll, purchase of services, maintenance, and equipment requirements needed to maintain service levels.

Summary:

In conclusion, the Ohio Board of Dietetics appreciates your consideration of the proposed budget request \$686,381.00 for FY 2012 and 2013.

The budget request allows the Board to continue to license qualified dietitians to provide nutritional care, investigate complaints, and monitor continuing education requirements as mandated by the Ohio legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this budget proposal, and for your thoughtful consideration of the matter. If you have any questions I will be glad to answer them.