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**WIDENER OBJECTS TO STATE UNIVERSITIES PURCHASING FACILITY
DATA TWICE**

COLUMBUS — State Senator Chris Widener (R—Springfield) released the following statement in response to Controlling Board deferral of a \$127,858 contract between Youngstown State University (YSU) and Sightlines, a facility assessment company headquartered in Guilford, CT:

“Since joining Controlling Board I have questioned the high volume of state contracts that are awarded to out-of-state companies, often without a competitive bidding process. This contract is especially concerning because it is the result of previous contracts that were awarded to Sightlines without any competitive opportunity. Ohio has a deep bench of capable firms that could have met this need, but unfortunately they didn’t have the chance to compete.”

Previously, the Ohio Board of Regents entered into a contract with Sightlines, a Connecticut firm, to provide a statewide assessment of the facilities in Ohio’s university system. This contract was approved in FY2010 and extended in FY2011 by Controlling Board at a total cost to the state of \$1,206,179; no competitive bidding process was conducted. At the time of the original contract several universities expressed concerns over the necessity and cost-effectiveness of Sightlines’ data collection services. Ultimately, the previous administration was successful in winning support for the \$1.2 million out-of-state contract.

Now, YSU wants additional detail and requested Controlling Board approval yesterday of a sole source contract with Sightlines in order to use the data from the original report and do more work at their campus. At the hearing, Senator Widener questioned the need to continue a relationship with an out-of-state entity that was lobbied for by the previous administration, especially since the data could be used by a number of Ohio-based firms.

Senator Widener said, “The request by Youngstown State is likely the first of many similar requests by Ohio’s public colleges and universities that will send millions to an out-of-state vendor without the opportunity for Ohio firms to compete.”

“The people of Ohio expect our public institutions of higher education to be fiscally responsible when spending money, whether it’s tuition or tax dollars. At a time when the university system is coalescing around a plan to decrease regulation, contracts like this lead me to wonder whether or not that is a good idea,” said Widener.

Ultimately, the other Controlling Board members agreed with Senator Widener and deferred Youngstown State's request to allow time for a more thorough review.

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Senator Chris Widener serves the people of the 10th Senate District, which includes Clark, Greene and Madison counties. He is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and a member of the Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development, Government Oversight & Reform, and Rules & Reference committees.