

# The Executive

## *Supplemental Agencies*

The operation of state government relies on a variety of boards, commissions, authorities and councils that provide services focused on particular issues that often cannot be addressed by larger government departments. Many supplemental agencies are fully staffed and operate daily while others have minimal staffing and may not function on a daily basis. Funding for each agency is dependent on how the organization was established.

Supplemental agencies can be created by the governor, the legislature or major departments. While the governor may appoint members to boards and commissions, the balance of powers requires that the Senate consent to the governor's appointments. Many of these supplementary agencies have been included in the discussion of the state departments to which they are related. Some started as state agencies and for various reasons the government converted them to nonprofit agencies. They and others of a more general nature are treated separately here.

### **Public Utilities Commission of Ohio**

The *Public Utilities Commission of Ohio* (PUCO) regulates providers of utility services, including electric and natural gas companies, local and long-distance telephone companies, water and wastewater companies and rail and trucking companies. PUCO was created to assure Ohioans adequate, safe and reliable public utility services at a fair price. More recently, the commission gained responsibility for facilitating competitive utility choices for Ohio consumers. PUCO is composed of five commissioners appointed to rotating, five-year terms by the governor. No more than three commissioners can be members of or affiliated with the same political party. One seat on the Commission becomes available each year.

Any Ohioan who is not employed by a public utility and does not have a financial interest in a public utility can apply for an open seat. The governor selects commissioners from a list of names submitted by the PUCO Nominating Council, a broad-based 12-member panel charged with screening candidates for commissioner.

### **Ohio Consumers' Counsel**

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. It advocates for consumers in proceedings before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, federal regulatory agencies, appellate courts and the Ohio General Assembly. The office monitors public utilities' compliance with regulatory standards for consumer protection. The OCC also educates consumers about utility issues that affect their bills and quality of service. Consumers may call the office at 877-742-5622.

The consumers' counsel, which directs the office, is selected by a nine-member bipartisan governing board representing family farmers, organized labor and residential consumers. The Attorney General appoints each governing board member.

## Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), formerly known as the Rehabilitation Services Commission, is a state agency charged with assisting Ohioans with disabilities in finding employment and independence. A seven-member commission advises the agency. The governor appoints members with the advice and consent of the Ohio Senate. No more than four commissioners may be of the same political party. Three must be representatives of the rehabilitation profession, including at least one member from the field of services to Ohioans who are blind. At least four commissioners must have a disability and two to three of them must have received vocational rehabilitation services from a state agency or the Veteran's Administration.

Two OOD bureaus provide eligible Ohioans with vocational rehabilitation services to prepare them for employment. The **Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired** serves people who are blind or have severe visual impairments. The **Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation** serves people with all other types of disabilities. Counselors in both bureaus work with clients to develop individualized rehabilitation programs that may include continuing education, specialized job training and on-the-job training, work adjustment training, and job placement. Both bureaus also provide tools and equipment to those in need of assistive technology or adaptive devices in order to obtain employment.

The agency's **Division of Disability Determination** is responsible for determining the eligibility for Ohio's Social Security Disability Determination and Supplemental Security Income claims on behalf of the federal Social Security Administration.

## Ohio Civil Rights Commission

The *Ohio Civil Rights Commission* (OCRC) is primarily responsible for enforcing state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. The commission receives and investigates charges of discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing, higher education and credit. The OCRC then renders formal determinations and, when it finds unlawful discrimination, attempts to broker a settlement between the parties.

Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, familial status (families with children) or military status is prohibited. Any person living or working in Ohio can file a charge of discrimination with one of the commission's regional offices in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, or Toledo. Persons aware of alleged discriminatory practices or individuals who believe they have been discriminated against may file charges. The regional offices investigate charges and make recommendations. There is no fee for using OCRC services. Both parties of a discrimination complaint may appeal rulings for reconsideration by the commission. The parties also may appeal to a court of common pleas. The OCRC receives and investigates thousands of official charges of discrimination each year.

The commission is responsible for educating constituents and stakeholders about Ohio's laws against discrimination. It also prepares a comprehensive educational program for the students of Ohio's public schools. These programs are designed to eliminate prejudice, its harmful effects and its incompatibility with American principles of equality and fair play. The governor appoints the five members of the commission to serve staggered five-year terms.

## **Ohio Public Defender Commission**

The *Ohio Public Defender Commission* provides a system of legal representation for indigent persons at state expense. Indigent persons may not be imprisoned for any offense if they have not been represented by counsel. Counsel must be available for interrogations and present for parole revocation hearings unless that right is waived.

The commission is bipartisan and consists of nine members: five appointed by the governor and four by the Ohio Supreme Court. More than half of the commissioners must be lawyers. The commission establishes standards for indigence and appoints a state public defender to coordinate and supervise public defense systems at the local level to ensure that they meet standards set by the commission.

## **Professional Boards**

A number of boards have been established to determine the qualifications necessary for admission to the practice of a particular profession or skill in Ohio. Examples include the *State Medical Board of Ohio*, *Ohio State Cosmetology and Barber Board* and *State of Ohio Architects Board*. The boards conduct examinations, issue licenses and collect fees from eligible candidates. Members are appointed by the governor and most are required to have professional qualifications in the field.

## **Ohio Ethics Commission**

The six-member bipartisan *Ohio Ethics Commission* administers and enforces the Ohio Ethics Law and financial disclosure requirements for all elected or appointed state and local public officials and public employees, except legislators, judges

and their staffs. The commission was created as a part of the Ohio Ethics Law of 1973, which prohibits public officials and employees from misusing their official position to benefit themselves, their family members, business associates or others where there is a conflict of interest.

The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee and the Board of Professional Conduct of the Ohio Supreme Court have jurisdiction over the officeholders and employees in their respective branches of government.

The governor appoints and the Senate confirms the six commission members. The commission provides educational sessions and information to the public, issues advisory opinions that interpret the Ohio Ethics Law for prospective or hypothetical situations, investigates violations and holds hearings to refer cases to the appropriate authority for prosecution. By law, all commission investigations are confidential.

### **Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs**

The commission, created in 1977, serves as a liaison between government and the Spanish-speaking people of Ohio and advises the governor and General Assembly on developing programs to meet their needs, including education, housing, employment and health. The governor appoints the commission's 11 members, some recommended by the legislative leadership. All commission members must speak Spanish, be of Spanish-speaking origin and be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

The *Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs* serves as the executive office for the commission. The office also provides information about Spanish-speaking attorneys, translators, and other services to the Spanish-speaking community.

### **Commission on Minority Health**

The goal of the *Commission on Minority Health* is to eliminate the higher rates of disease and poorer health outcomes that exist among racial and ethnic minority populations compared to non-minority populations. The commission established Local Offices of Minority Health in Akron, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. At the state level and at these offices, the commission is responsible for supporting health disparity research and promoting public health initiatives, legislative action, public policy and change.

Its priority populations are African-American, African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Latino American and Native American. The commission currently focuses on infant mortality, cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, substance abuse, violence and lupus.

### **Ohio Department of Health Women's Program**

The purpose of the *Women's Health Program* at ODH is to improve women's health through initiatives addressing issues ranging from pregnancy to preventing

chronic diseases. Women suffer more frequently from cancer, stroke, diabetes and other chronic diseases than do men. The program offers education and resources to help women live and eat healthier; navigate breast and cervical cancer screenings in their area of the state (free to women who qualify); breast feed, maintain a healthy pregnancy and provide proper nutrition to infants and young children. Programs also provide resources to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking.

## **Ohio Women Veterans Advisory Committee**

Part of the Ohio Department of Veteran's Services, the advisory committee advocates for women veterans' issues and is a resource the state's 67,000 women veterans may use to learn about and access benefits, entitlements, education, employment opportunities and job training they've earned through their service. Committee members must be honorably discharged from the service. They and Ohio Women Veterans program managers are located throughout the state. The committee website includes listings of activities and events that the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters, other organizations and the Ohio government have scheduled that may be of interest or benefit to women veterans.

## **Office of Opportunities for New Americans**

The *Office of Opportunities for New Americans* (OONA) is charged with identifying and taking down barriers that prevent or impede new immigrants' integration into society and economic success. The office's duties include aligning existing or new programs and policies that attract new immigrants and support workforce training, education and occupational licensing for legal immigrants. The office was created within the Developmental Services Agency, by Gov. John Kasich's executive order in 2018.

To help tackle the responsibilities, the 12-member *New Americans Advisory Board*, which includes members of immigrant communities, businesses and non-profit organizations, works with the Ohio departments of Education, Higher Education, Job and Family Services and Commerce; the Development Services Agency and Office of Workforce Transformation to provide guidance to the office. The office website directs immigrants to a number of current services and resources. The office, like any created by executive order, is subject to change or closure by subsequent executive orders.

## **Ohio Office of Health Transformation**

The *Office of Health Transformation* is charged with reducing the number of uninsured by extending Medicaid to more Ohioans, streamlining and coordinating care among departments of Medicaid, Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Aging and more; reducing costs while improving health outcomes, expanding community behavioral health capacity and much more. The office is

responsible for working with government agencies, private insurers and health care providers to shift away from health care payments based on the number of services provided to payments based on the value of care, that is to reward providers for services that improve or maintain health. The office was created by executive order of Gov. John Kasich in 2011. When Gov. Mike DeWine took office in 2019, he gave administrative authority over the office to the director of RecoveryOhio in his executive order creating the Governor's RecoveryOhio Initiative

## **New African Immigrants Commission**

The 11-member commission is responsible for identifying the needs of the estimated 110,000 sub-Saharan African immigrants in Ohio and working with state agencies to promote the delivery of appropriate state services. The commission's goal is to enable the immigrants, many of whom are refugees, to become self-sufficient. The commission was created by legislation in 2009 but only began operating when Gov. John Kasich appointed its first six members in 2017. The commission has created five standing committees that will execute many of the commission responsibilities: Education and Cultural Affairs, Workforce and Business Development, Social Services and Outreach, Health and Wellness, and Legal Services. Commission members travel the state on listening tours, to learn each region's or community's needs.

## **Ohio State School for the Blind**

The Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB) offers elementary, middle and high school education, including adaptive physical education and multiple disabilities education, to meet the requirements of each student's Individualized Education Program. The Ohio Department of Education oversees the school. OSSB teaches life skills, use of technology and job skills and provides extracurricular opportunities in athletics, music and art. Students are taught skills needed to travel independently and safely. They may receive support services, such as speech and physical therapy. The school provides services statewide to families and school districts teaching visually impaired students. Established as the Ohio Institute for the Education of the Blind in 1839, it is the oldest school for the blind in the United States.

## **Ohio School for the Deaf**

The Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD) provides programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and preschoolers and a kindergarten-through-12th-grade curriculum in American Sign Language and English, comparable to Ohio public schools' curriculum. The Ohio Department of Education oversees the school, which is open to residential and day students. OSD focuses on social, academic and career development. It offers athletics and provides speech therapy, psychological testing, counseling, technology instruction and teaches transition to adult life. OSD also works with Ohio schools and educational programs serving deaf and hard-of-hearing

students and their families in an effort to meet each student's individual needs. The OSD Alumni Association is responsible for the country's only elderly care facility designed for and run by deaf persons.

## **Disability Rights Ohio**

The mission of the nonprofit Disability Rights Ohio, formerly Ohio Legal Rights Services, is to protect and advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of Ohioans with a wide range of disabilities. The agency helps people with disabilities integrate into Ohio communities; solve problems with abuse, neglect and discrimination; obtain assistive technology devices and services, housing, employment, special education and access to voting. It also advocates for and protects the rights of people with disabilities in the juvenile and adult justice systems. Among the people it assists are those with mental illness, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury and beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance.

The agency is designated under federal law as the state system providing these protections and advocacy and as the state's Client Assistance Program (CAP) under the Rehabilitation Act. In its role as CAP, the agency is a legal advocate for people applying for or receiving services from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation or Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired and/or the Independent Living Centers throughout Ohio.

## **Ohio Housing Finance Agency**

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) is a nonprofit designed to help first-time home-buyers, renters, the elderly and others to find affordable housing that fits their needs. The agency provides financial education and guidance to help would-be home-buyers. OHFA works with lenders to offer loans aimed at making buying a home affordable to low- and moderate-income individuals and families. It also administers the Save the Dream Ohio program to help those struggling to pay their mortgage to prevent foreclosure. The agency's Office of Housing Policy collaborates with Ohio colleges and universities on housing research and to develop policies designed to meet the state's needs for affordable rentals and single-owner homes. OHFA provides developers tax support and incentives to build or renovate low- and moderate-income single-family and multi-family housing. The agency also offers guidance to help developers comply with regulations and keep their project financially viable.

## **Other Agencies**

A more comprehensive list of state agencies may be found at: [www.ohio.gov/agencies](http://www.ohio.gov/agencies).