OFT Retirement Committee

2026 Resolution

SUPPORTING THE AUTONOMY OF THE STRS OHIO BOARD AGAINST POLITICAL HOSTILITY

WHEREAS, for decades, the teaching profession in Ohio was predicated upon a social contract where educators accepted comparatively lower annual pay in exchange for the promise of a solid, defined benefit pension, including a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA); and

WHEREAS, in the years following the Great Recession, the burden of financial recovery was placed squarely on educators, leading to teacher contributions being unilaterally increased from 10% to 14% of salary, the qualifying years for full retirement benefits being raised to 35 years, and a suspension of COLAs; and

WHEREAS, in response to STRS mismanagement and lack of transparency, massive democratic member advocacy fueled successful elections that installed a majority of reform-minded STRS Board members; and

WHEREAS, our elected voices, including OFT members Pat Davidson, Liz Jones, and Julie Sellers, have delivered tangible and fiscally responsible results, making progress towards restoring the original pension promise when actuarially responsible by approving multiple COLAs in recent years including a 1.5% COLA effective July 1, 2025, and reducing the years of service requirement for unreduced retirement benefits from 35 years to 32 years; and

WHEREAS, the elected reform board has overseen a dramatic improvement in the fund's stability, with the funding ratio increasing to 80.9% and the time needed to fully fund liabilities decreasing to a sustainable 11.8 years; and

WHEREAS, this success was met with political hostility from Republican state leaders when Representative Adam Bird, and Speaker Matt Huffman, manipulated and weaponized fabricated chaos to orchestrate a hostile takeover of the STRS Board in June 2025, inserting a last-minute, unvetted amendment into the budget bill in the dead of night that will reduce elected educator representation from seven seats to only three, ensuring by 2028 that eight political appointees control the $107 billion fund; and

WHEREAS, this action is a targeted attack on educators and has been deemed "unconstitutional and discriminatory" in the lawsuit filed by the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT), the Ohio Education Association (OEA), and the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (OC AAUP), because STRS is the *only* Ohio public pension system targeted for the removal of its elected member majority; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ohio Federation of Teachers, at its 2026 Convention, strongly condemns the aggressive and undemocratic maneuvers undertaken by Republican state leaders, including Governor Mike DeWine, Attorney General Dave Yost, Representative Adam Bird, and Speaker Matt Huffman, whose actions represent a systemic hostility towards public educators and their right to govern their own retirement security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the OFT affirms its unwavering confidence in and expresses profound gratitude for the diligence, ethical conduct, and financial stewardship demonstrated by our elected board members and allies, including Pat Davidson, Liz Jones, Julie Sellers, Rudy Fichtenbaum, Michelle Flanigan, Michael Harkness, and Chad Smith, for stabilizing the STRS fund, restoring benefits, and increasing transparency despite intense political pressure and baseless allegations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the OFT pledges full political and financial support for the ongoing lawsuit filed by the OFT, OEA, and OC AAUP to challenge the unconstitutional hostile takeover of the STRS Board composition, insisting upon the restoration of the elected educator majority and accountability for the politicians who abused the legislative process to diminish our democratic voice; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the OFT urges the membership to encourage the Governor and the Ohio General Assembly to honor the dedication of Ohio's public educators by introducing and passing legislation to restore the original STRS Board structure and composition.