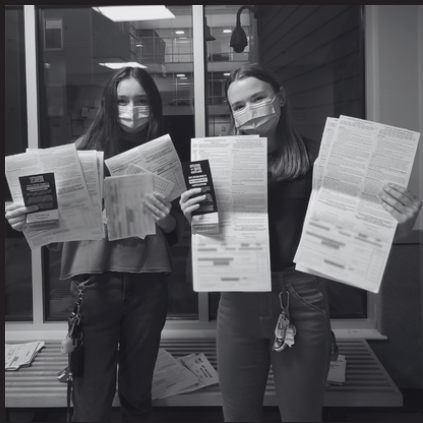


# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT



# OHIO STUDENT ASSOCIATION

# OSA IS A POLITICAL HOME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.



*OSA isn't about speaking for young people— it's about empowering young people with the tools to not only speak for themselves, but to organize their communities and build power to win the future we all deserve.*

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
RACHAEL COLLYER**





# OHIO STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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The Ohio Student Association is a statewide grassroots organization led by young people and anchored by student-led chapters on college campuses across the state. OSA brings together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future. Formed in 2012 in the throes of the Occupy movement, we have grounded ourselves in the vision of accessible education, transformative justice, and participatory democracy in which every young person has a valued voice.

## 2021 OVERVIEW

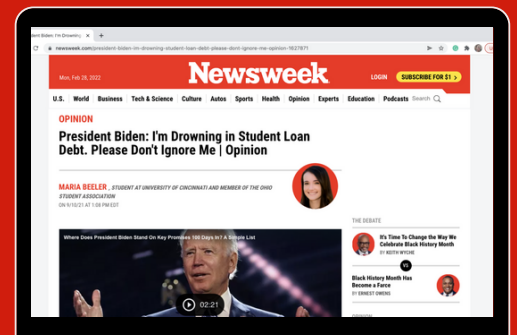
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Reflecting back on the past year, there have been plenty of trials placing young people at the forefront of the fight towards real justice and a multi-racial democracy in our state and in our country. 2021 reminded us of the threat of white supremacy to our democracy when not even a week into the year, our Capitol was stormed. When tasked to redraw our state map, certain politicians willfully chose to design rigged, gerrymandered districts in a nontransparent and non-participatory process. In effect, these maps misrepresent the people of Ohio and, in particular, dilute the voices of communities of color. Despite the release of COVID vaccines, the pandemic has continued to wreak havoc in Ohio communities to the point where the governor has mobilized national guard members to assist our overwhelmed hospitals. In addition to revealing vulnerabilities in our health services, the pandemic has meant lower college enrollment and greater economic insecurity for young people. It has been in this setting that OSA members have organized and built power together. *Despite the challenges we have faced, 2021 was a year marked by notable wins and growth worth celebrating.*

# FIGHTING FOR EDUCATION DEBT RELIEF

Ever since OSA was founded in 2012, student debt relief and cancellation has been one of our major issues given that it has such a broad impact on students, especially those from a working-class background. High tuition and accumulating loans either entirely gatekeep disadvantaged students from higher education or put major obstacles in their way towards earning a degree or degrees and ultimately becoming economically stable, successful, and happy people. In addition to advocating for student debt cancellation at the national level, we have also fought for supportive statewide policies such as expanding need-based financial aid and institutionalizing debt navigators as a means of limiting the debt students grapple with.

In such efforts, young people's voices, sharing our experiences with the student debt crisis, have become a potent force for change. In 2021, our members from throughout Ohio met with numerous legislators, including Senator Sherrod Brown and Representative Marcy Kaptur, to express our invested interest in making college accessible to all students, regardless of race or income. Early in the year, Maria Beeler from the University of Cincinnati OSA chapter shared her student debt story over the [radio](#) and this past fall even published an [op-ed](#) featured in Newsweek! In June, Central State alum and Dayton student organizer Kalesha Scott took part in an Instagram live hosted by the Alliance for Youth Action featuring other young leaders from New Era Colorado and the Virginia Power Network discussing student debt and college affordability as part of the Alliance's Dreams Not Debt campaign. When we make sure our voices are included in political conversations, the struggles we experience can no longer be ignored.



*"Eliminating my education debt would mean that I could live to learn. It would mean that I could go to graduate school to pursue a passion—instead of pushing it aside to focus on paying off my debt. It would mean that I could treat my education as a springboard instead of a burden."*

**MARIA BEELER** (From "[President Biden: I'm Drowning in Student Loan Debt. Please Don't Ignore Me | Opinion](#)" on Newsweek)

# COMBATING THE "TRANSCRIPT TRAP"

Students and former students throughout the state have long had to deal with a punitive policy we have dubbed "the transcript trap." If a student owes outstanding debt to their university, the university can withhold their transcripts, which may prevent them from being able to transfer credits to a different university or hold them back from accessing employment opportunities, among other struggles.

Working alongside coalition partners Policy Matters Ohio, College Now Greater Cleveland, and the Ohio Federation of Teachers, we helped collect and amplify student stories about the transcript trap. Together, we also hosted an informative livestream series, with each installment focusing on a different topic of higher education policy, including the transcript trap, and featuring different guest speakers. Kent State graduate and student organizer Akii Butler presented in-person testimony in front of the Senate Workforce & Higher Ed Committee, sharing his personal experience around the transcript trap and explaining how it sets up students to fail.



*"Banning transcript withholding by schools is the best solution... that way students can finish their education, they can get a better job, and be in the position where they can actually pay back that money they owe."*

**AKII BUTLER** (From [testimony](#) on the *Ohio Channel*)



## WINNING A FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING PLAN FOR OHIO

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OSA is passionate about fighting for accessible and affordable education at all levels, including those before college. Through the All In For Ohio Kids (A-OK!) Coalition, also made up of the state's two largest teachers unions, Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers as well as the thinktank Policy Matters Ohio, we have helped pass the Fair School Funding Plan in the 2021-2022 Ohio budget, to keep lawmakers accountable to their promises of supporting fairly and fully-funded Ohio schools.

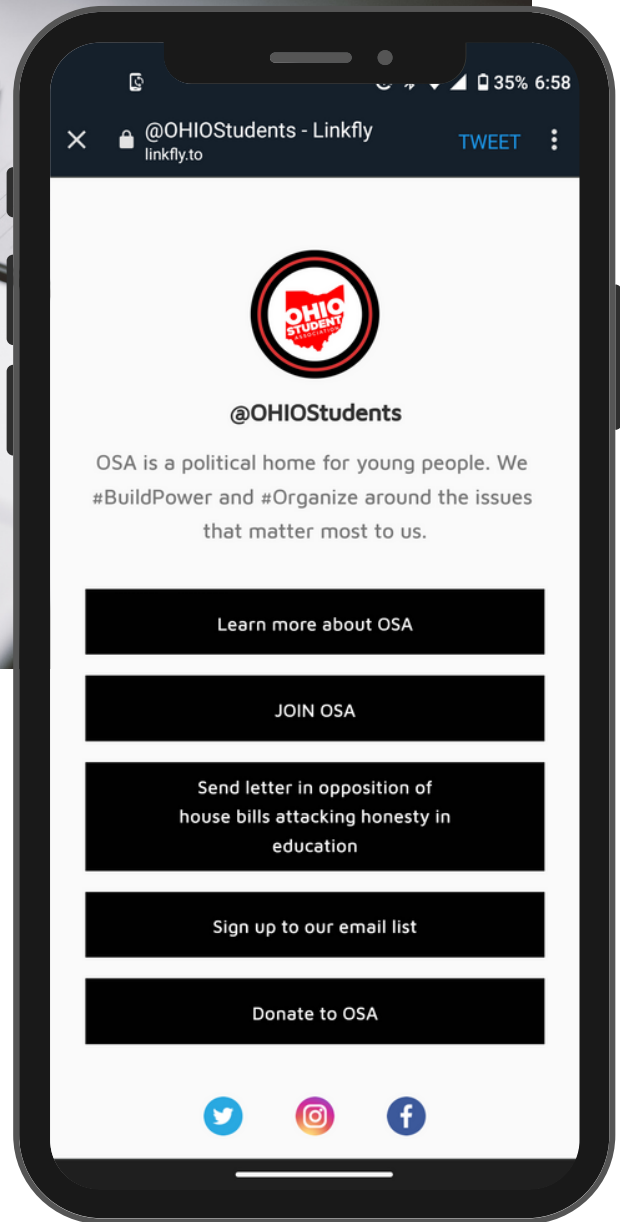
## PROTECTING HONESTY IN EDUCATION

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This past year, the HB322 and 327 bills were introduced in the legislature, with the aim of prohibiting the teaching or promotion of "divisive concepts." These concepts include anything about race, gender, sexuality, religion, current events, and more. Over the past year, OSA has worked closely with Honesty For Ohio Education, to fight these bills. We have held numerous testimony workshops, held events focusing on why these bills are dangerous, as well as gotten over 1,000 letters sent to the committee members urging them to not pass these bills. While we have made some headway, there is still a long way to go and we will continue to fight against it.



# SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE



**5.3K**

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS AT  
[/OHIOSTUDENTASSOCIATION](#)

**5.17K**

TWITTER FOLLOWERS AT  
[@OHIOSTUDENTS](#)

**1.9K**

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS AT  
[@OHIOSTUDENTS](#)

**20K**

WEBSITE VIEWS AT  
[OHIOSTUDENTASSOCIATION.ORG](#)



# PASSING ISSUE 24 IN CLEVELAND, A POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURE

Alongside partners Black Lives Matter Cleveland, the ACLU of Ohio, NAACP Cleveland, and Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ) Northeast Ohio, OSA played a key role in the Citizens for a Safer Cleveland campaign, which fought to pass a robust police accountability ballot measure to make the city of Cleveland safer for everyone, regardless of our zip code or skin color. OSA members spent countless hours helping to collect 15,000+ signatures in order to put the issue on the local ballot, and countless more registering, educating, and turning out student voters on Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University's campuses. All the tireless groundwork and organizing paid off, and on November 2nd Issue 24 passed in a landslide victory, delivering Cleveland the most powerful civilian oversight over police in the country!





# MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



**HOLLY PADEN**

Ohio State University

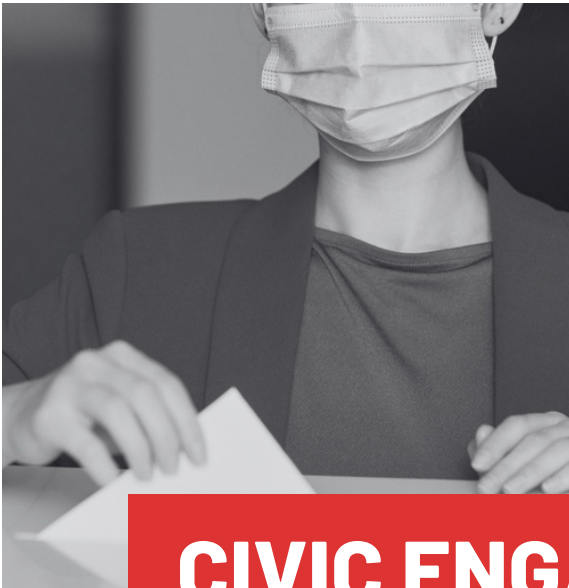
In being a part of OSA, I've developed leadership and communication skills that I, previously, didn't even have the vocabulary to accurately define. I've gotten to sit in on multiple workshops where I learned about power mapping, how to research and verify facts and references, and how to write testimony and opinion editorials. I was able to provide my input by submitting testimony against anti-CRT bills introduced in the Ohio legislature, as well as to voice my support for equity in energy jobs. OSA has also helped connect me to a greater network of activists and advocates, and I look forward to continuing to actively push for equity and justice in my community.



**DEAYRA GREGORY**

Cleveland State University

I am a sophomore majoring in Business Management at Cleveland State University. The most recent accomplishment I've taken part of in OSA is passing issue 24 in the city of Cleveland. OSA advocated for issue 24 by collecting signatures on our initiative petition. We did this by canvassing, tabling, and even hosting a cookout event on campus. My next goal within OSA is to apply more funding to the programs that need it.



Civic engagement is central to OSA's mission; from voter education to getting out the vote, OSA members work to engage more young people in our democracy (2021 being no exception). Indeed, this past year we knocked on over 14,000 doors and made almost 3,000 calls in Cuyahoga County.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## CONCLUSION

In addition to accomplishments at the statewide and local levels, our individual chapters have been launching their own campaigns and organizing to improve their campus and community. At Central State, for instance, a whopping 90% of the freshman class was registered to vote this year! Additionally, students from our chapters at Ohio State and Kent helped send in testimony in opposition to the "divisive concepts" bills. Other chapters have dived into conducting research about campus safety, with the intention of fighting for a campus where everyone feels safe regardless of their economic background or skin color.

Looking forward, the Ohio Student Association will continue its efforts in regard to criminal justice, civic engagement, and accessible education. We will continue to develop our local chapters and invest in the leadership and skills of our members. OSA believes in the power of young people to transform the state of Ohio and lead meaningful change in our communities and on our campuses. If you are interested in joining OSA, fill out our membership form here: [bit.ly/3C78Bbm](https://bit.ly/3C78Bbm).





# SELECTED MEDIA

- [Ohio bills seek to ban teaching of critical race theory](#) (KentWired.com)
- [Citizens for a Safer Cleveland pushes for monumental changes in community oversight of police](#) (The Observer)
- [Race education bills get big turnout in legislature, most urging opposition](#) (Ohio Capital Journal)
- [President Biden: I'm Drowning in Student Loan Debt. Please Don't Ignore Me | Opinion](#) (Newsweek)
- [Doula care should be available to all mothers](#) (Dayton Daily News)



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