



OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE
KEITH FABER



**SOUTHWEST OHIO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
WARREN COUNTY**

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Warren County
1879 Deerfield Road
Lebanon, Ohio 45036

To the Board of Directors:

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the cash-basis financial statements of the Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County, Ohio (the Council), as of and for the years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the Council's basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the cash-basis financial position of the Council, as of June 30, 2024 and 2023, and the changes in cash basis financial position and where applicable cash flows thereof for the year then ended in accordance with the cash basis of accounting described in Note 2.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Council, and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Emphasis of Matter - Accounting Basis

We draw attention to Note 2 of the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements are prepared on the cash basis of accounting, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Our opinion is not modified with respect to this matter.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the cash basis of accounting described in Note 2, and for determining that the cash basis of accounting is an acceptable basis for preparation of the financial statements in the circumstances. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Council's ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinions. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards*, we

- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated March 4, 2025, on our consideration of the Council's internal control over financial reporting and our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards in considering the Council's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Keith Faber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Keith Faber
Auditor of State
Columbus, Ohio
March 4, 2025

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Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Net Position - Cash Basis
June 30, 2024

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Assets:	
Current Assets:	
Equity in Pooled Cash and Cash Equivalents	<u>\$2,304,538</u>
Total Assets	<u>2,304,538</u>
Net Position:	
Unrestricted	<u>2,304,538</u>
Total Net Position	<u><u>\$2,304,538</u></u>

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Changes in Net Position - Cash Basis
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Operating Receipts:	
Charges for Services	\$19,171,066
Total Operating Receipts	19,171,066
Operating Disbursements:	
Salaries	13,983,846
Fringe Benefits	4,341,350
Purchased Services	536,745
Materials and Supplies	60
Other Disbursements	274,617
Total Operating Disbursements	19,136,618
Operating Income (Loss)	34,448
Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses):	
Investment Earnings	92,545
Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses)	92,545
Change in Net Position	126,993
Net Position - Beginning of Year	2,177,545
Net Position - End of Year	\$2,304,538

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Cash Flows - Cash Basis
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Cash Flows from Operating Activities:	
Cash Received from Member Districts	\$19,171,066
Cash Payments to Employees	(13,983,846)
Cash Payments to Fringe Benefits	(4,341,350)
Cash Payments to Suppliers	(536,745)
Cash Payments for Materials and Supplies	(60)
Cash Payments for Other Disbursements	(274,617)
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	34,448
	<hr/>
Cash Flows from Investing Activities:	
Earnings on Investments	92,545
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Cash Flows from Investing Activities	92,545
	<hr/>
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	126,993
	<hr/>
Cash and Cash Equivalents Beginning of Year	2,177,545
	<hr/>
Cash and Cash Equivalents End of Year	2,304,538
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Reconciliation of Operating Income (Loss) to Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	
Operating Income (Loss)	34,448
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	\$34,448
	<hr/> <hr/>

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Note 1 - Description of the COG and Reporting Entity

Description of the COG

The Southwest Ohio Council of Governments (the "COG"), is a body Corporate and Politic established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Chapter 167, by agreement of its members. The COG is a jointly governed organization of the Warren County Educational Service Center and the Warren County Commissioners. The COG is currently providing services for eighteen member school districts and other entities in southwest Ohio, principally providing substitute teachers and substitute classified personnel. Warren County Educational Service Center acts as a fiscal officer for the COG.

The governing authority of Southwest Ohio Council of Governments (COG) is the COG Board, which is comprised of five board members. There are three Warren County ESC representatives including the treasurer, and two Warren County Commissioner representatives. The Warren County ESC superintendent is the current board president. The Officer positions of the COG Board are President and Treasurer.

Reporting Entity

A reporting entity is comprised of the primary government, component units, and other organizations that are included to ensure that the financial statements are not misleading. The primary government of the COG consists of all funds, departments, boards, and agencies that are not legally separate from the COG. For the COG, this is the general operation.

Component units are legally separate organizations for which the COG is financially accountable. The COG is financially accountable for an organization if the COG appoints a voting majority of the organization's governing board and (1) the COG is able to significantly influence the programs or services performed or provided by the organization; or (2) the COG is legally entitled to or can otherwise access the organization's resources; the COG is legally obligated or has otherwise assumed the responsibility to finance the deficits of, or provide financial support to, the organization; or the COG is obligated for the debt of the organization. Component units may also include organizations that are fiscally dependent on the COG in that the COG approves the budget, the issuance of debt, or the levying of taxes. The COG has no component units.

Note 2 - Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

These financial statements are presented on a cash basis of accounting. The cash basis of accounting differs from accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) include all relevant Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) pronouncements, which have been applied to the extent they are applicable to the cash basis of accounting. Following are the more significant of the COG's accounting policies:

Basis of Presentation

The COG's basic financial statements consist of a statement of net position – cash basis, a statement of receipts, disbursements, and changes in net position – cash basis, and a statement of cash flows – cash basis.

The COG uses a single enterprise presentation for its financial records. Enterprise reporting focuses on the determination of operating income, changes in net position and financial position.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Measurement Focus

The COG uses a cash basis of accounting for reporting purposes. Receipts are recognized when they are received, and disbursements are recognized when they are paid.

Basis of Accounting

The COG's financial statements are prepared using the cash basis of accounting. Receipts are recorded in the COG's financial records and reported in the financial statements when cash is received rather than when earned and disbursements are recorded when cash is paid rather than when the liability is incurred.

As a result of the cash basis of accounting, certain assets and their related receipts (such as accounts receivable and receipt billed for provided services not yet collected) and certain liabilities (such as accounts payable and disbursements for goods or services received but not yet paid, and accrued disbursements and liabilities) are not recorded in these financial statements. If the COG utilized the basis of accounting recognized as generally accepted, the fund and all government-wide financial statements would be presented on the accrual basis of accounting.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

To improve cash management, cash received by the COG is pooled. Monies for all funds are maintained in this pool. Individual fund integrity is maintained through COG records. Each fund's interest in the pool is presented as "Equity in Pooled Cash and Cash Equivalents" on the financial statements.

Following Ohio statutes, the Board of Directors has, by resolution, specified the funds to receive an allocation of interest earnings. \$92,545 of interest receipts were credited during Fiscal Year 2024.

Capital Assets

Acquisitions of property, plant and equipment are recorded as disbursements when paid. The financial statements do not report these assets.

Net Position

Net position is reported as restricted when there are limitations imposed on their use either through the enabling legislation adopted by the COG or through external restrictions imposed by creditors, grantors or laws, or regulations of other governments.

The COG applies restricted resources when a disbursement is incurred for purposes for which both restricted and unrestricted net position are available.

Operating Receipts and Disbursements

Operating receipts are those receipts that are generated directly from the primary activity of the COG. Operating disbursements are necessary costs incurred to provide the good or service that is the primary activity of the COG. All receipts and disbursements not meeting this definition are reported as non-operating.

Pensions/Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB)

For purposes of measuring the net pension/OPEB liability (asset), information about the fiduciary net position of the pension/OPEB plans and additions to/deductions from their fiduciary net position have been determined on the same basis as they are reported by the pension/OPEB plan. For this purpose, benefit payments (including refunds of employee contributions) are recognized when due and payable in accordance with the benefit terms. The pension/OPEB plans report investments at fair value.

Note 3 - Deposits and Investments

State statutes classify monies held by the COG into three categories.

Active deposits are public deposits necessary to meet current demands on the treasury. Such monies must be maintained either as cash in the COG Treasury, in commercial accounts payable or withdrawable on demand, including negotiable order of withdrawal (NOW) accounts, or in money market deposit accounts.

Inactive deposits are public deposits that the Board has identified as not required for use within the current five year period of designation of depositories. Inactive deposits must be either evidenced by certificates of deposit maturing not later than the end of the current period of designation of depositories, or by savings or deposit accounts including, but not limited to, passbook accounts.

Interim deposits are deposits of interim moneys. Interim moneys are those moneys which are not needed for immediate use but which will be needed before the end of the current period of designation of depositories. Interim deposits must be evidenced by time certificates of deposit maturing not more than one year from the date of deposit or by savings accounts including passbook accounts.

Protection of the COG's deposits is provided by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), by eligible securities pledged by the financial institution as security for repayment, or by the financial institutions participation in the Ohio Pooled Collateral System (OPCS), a collateral pool of eligible securities deposited with a qualified trustee and pledged to the Treasurer of State to secure the repayment of all public monies deposited in the financial institution.

Interim monies may be deposited or invested in the following securities:

1. United States Treasury Notes, Bills, Bonds, or any other obligation or security issued by the United States Treasury or any other obligation guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States.
2. Bonds, notes, debentures, or any other obligations or securities issued by any federal government agency or instrumentality, including but not limited to, the Federal National Mortgage Association, Federal Home Loan Bank, Federal Farm Credit Bank, Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, Government National Mortgage Association, and Student Loan Marketing Association. All federal agency securities shall be direct issuances of federal government agencies or instrumentalities.
3. Written repurchase agreements in the securities listed above, provided that the fair value of the securities subject to the repurchase agreement must exceed the principal value of the agreement by at least two percent and be marked to fair value daily, and that the term of the agreement must not exceed thirty days.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

4. Bonds and other obligations of the State of Ohio, and with certain limitations including a requirement for maturity within ten years from the date of settlement, bonds and other obligations of political subdivisions of the State of Ohio, if training requirements have been met.
5. No-load money market mutual funds consisting exclusively of obligations described in division (1) or (2) of this section, and repurchase agreements secured by such obligations, provided that investments in securities described in this division are made only through eligible institutions.
6. The State Treasurer's investment pool (STAR Ohio).
7. Certain bankers' acceptance for a period not to exceed one hundred eighty days and commercial paper notes (for a period not to exceed two hundred seventy days) in an amount not to exceed 40 percent of the interim monies available for investment at any one time if training requirements have been met
8. Under limited circumstances, corporate debt interests rated in either of the two highest rating classifications by at least two nationally recognized rating agencies.

Investments in stripped principal or interest obligations, reverse repurchase agreements, and derivatives are prohibited. The issuance of taxable notes for the purpose of arbitrage, the use of leverage, and short selling are also prohibited. Except as noted above, an investment must mature within five years from the date of purchase unless matched to a specific obligation or debt of the COG, and must be purchased with the expectation that it will be held to maturity.

Investments may only be made through specified dealers and institutions. Payment for investments may be made only upon delivery of the securities representing the investments to the Fiscal officer or qualified trustee or, if the securities are not represented by a certificate, upon receipt of confirmation of transfer from the custodian.

Deposits

Custodial credit risk for deposits is the risk that in the event of bank failure, the COG will not be able to recover deposits or collateral securities that are in the possession of an outside party. At June 30, 2024, the carrying amount of all COG deposits was \$888,128. As of June 30, 2024, the COG's bank balance of \$883,873 was covered by FDIC or collateralized as discussed below.

The COG has no deposit policy for custodial risk beyond the requirements of State statute. Ohio law requires that deposits either be insured or be protected by:

Eligible securities pledged to the COG and deposited with a qualified trustee by the financial institution as security for repayment whose market value at all times shall be at least 105 percent of the deposits being secured; or

Participation in the Ohio Pooled Collateral System (OPCS), a collateral pool of eligible securities deposited with a qualified trustee and pledged to the Treasurer of State to secure the repayment of all public monies deposited in the financial institution. OPCS requires the total market value of the securities pledged to be 102% of the deposits being secured or a rate set by the Treasurer of State.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Investments

As of June 30, 2024, the COG had \$1,416,410 invested in StarOhio.

Note 4 - Risk Management

The COG is exposed to various risks of loss related to torts, theft of, damage to and destruction of assets, errors and omissions, injuries to employees and natural disasters. The COG carries insurance coverage with Wright Insurance Company

Limits and deductible amounts for the above policies vary accordingly.

<u>COVERAGE</u>	<u>LIMITS</u>	<u>DEDUCTIBLE</u>
Educators Legal Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence \$3,000,000 general aggregate	\$2,500 each wrongful act
General Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence \$3,000,000 general aggregate	

The COG pays the State of Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation System a premium based on a rate per \$100 of salaries. This rate is calculated based on accident history and administrative costs.

Settled claims have not exceeded the commercial coverage in any of the past three years. There have been no significant reductions in insurance coverage from last year.

Note 5 - Defined Benefit Pension Plans

The Statewide retirement systems provide both pension benefits and other postemployment benefits (OPEB).

Net Pension Liability/Net OPEB Liability (Asset)

Pensions and OPEB are a component of exchange transactions—between an employer and its employees—of salaries and benefits for employee services. Pensions/OPEB are provided to an employee—on a deferred-payment basis—as part of the total compensation package offered by an employer for employee services each financial period.

The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) represent the COG's proportionate share of each pension/OPEB plan's collective actuarial present value of projected benefit payments attributable to past periods of service, net of each pension/OPEB plan's fiduciary net position. The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) calculation is dependent on critical long-term variables, including estimated average life expectancies, earnings on investments, cost of living adjustments and others. While these estimates use the best information available, unknowable future events require adjusting these estimates annually.

Ohio Revised Code limits the COG's obligation for this liability to annually required payments. The COG cannot control benefit terms or the manner in which pensions/OPEB are financed; however, the COG does receive the benefit of employees' services in exchange for compensation including pension and OPEB.

GASB 68/75 assumes the liability is solely the obligation of the employer, because (1) they benefit from

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

employee services; and (2) State statute requires funding to come from these employers. All pension contributions to date have come solely from these employers (which also includes pension costs paid in the form of withholdings from employees). The retirement systems may allocate a portion of the employer contributions to provide for these OPEB benefits. In addition, health care plan enrollees pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. State statute requires the retirement systems to amortize unfunded pension liabilities within 30 years. If the pension amortization period exceeds 30 years, each retirement system's board must propose corrective action to the State legislature. Any resulting legislative change to benefits or funding could significantly affect the net pension/OPEB liability (asset). Resulting adjustments to the net pension/OPEB liability (asset) would be effective when the changes are legally enforceable. The Ohio revised Code permits, but does not require the retirement systems to provide healthcare to eligible benefit recipients.

The remainder of this note includes the required pension disclosures. See Note 6 for the required OPEB disclosures.

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Plan Description

COG non-teaching employees participate in SERS, a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan administered by SERS. SERS provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits, and death benefits to plan members and beneficiaries. Authority to establish and amend benefits is provided by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3309. SERS issues a publicly available, stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information and detailed information about SERS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by visiting the SERS website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

Age and service requirements for retirement are as follows:

	Eligible to Retire on or before August 1, 2017 *	Eligible to Retire on or after August 1, 2017
Full Benefits	Any age with 30 years of service credit	Age 67 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 57 with 30 years of service credit
Actuarially Reduced Benefits	Age 60 with 5 years of service credit Age 55 with 25 years of service credit	Age 62 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 60 with 25 years of service credit

* Members with 25 years of service credit as of August 1, 2017, will be included in this plan.

Annual retirement benefits are calculated based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service; 2.2 percent for the first thirty years of service and 2.5 percent for years of service credit over 30. Final average salary is the average of the highest three years of salary.

An individual whose benefit effective date is before April 1, 2018, is eligible for a cost of living adjustment (COLA) on the first anniversary date of the benefit. New benefit recipients must wait until the fourth anniversary of their benefit for COLA eligibility. The COLA is added each year to the base benefit amount on the anniversary date of the benefit. The COLA is indexed to the percentage increase in the CPI-W, not to exceed 2.5 percent and with a floor of 0 percent. A three-year COLA suspension was in effect for all benefit recipients for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Retirement Board approved a 2.5 percent COLA for calendar year 2023.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Funding Policy

Plan members are required to contribute 10 percent of their annual covered salary and the COG is required to contribute 14 percent of annual covered payroll. The contribution requirements of plan members and employers are established and may be amended by the SERS' Retirement Board up to statutory maximum amounts of 10 percent for plan members and 14 percent for employers. The Retirement Board, acting with the advice of the actuary, allocates the employer contribution rate among four of the System's funds (Pension Trust Fund, Death Benefit Fund, Medicare B Fund, and Health Care Fund). For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, the allocation to pension, death benefits, and Medicare B was 14.0 percent. For fiscal year 2024, the Retirement Board did not allocate any employer contribution to the Health Care Fund.

The COG's contractually required contribution to SERS was \$972,641 for fiscal year 2024.

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description

COG licensed teachers and other faculty members participate in STRS Ohio, a cost-sharing multiple employer public employee system administered by STRS. STRS provides retirement and disability benefits to members and death and survivor benefits to beneficiaries. STRS issues a stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information, and detailed information about STRS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by writing to STRS, 275 E. Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215-3771, by calling (888) 227-7877, or by visiting the STRS Web site at www.strsoh.org.

New members have a choice of three retirement plans: a Defined Benefit (DB) Plan, a Defined Contribution (DC) Plan, and a Combined Plan. Benefits are established by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307.

The DB plan offers an annual retirement allowance based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service. Effective August 1, 2015, the calculation is 2.2 percent of final average salary for the five highest years of earnings multiplied by all years of service. In April 2017, the Retirement Board made the decision to reduce COLA granted on or after July 1, 2017, to 0 percent upon a determination by its actuary that it was necessary to preserve the fiscal integrity of the retirement system. Benefit recipients' base benefit and past cost-of living increases are not affected by this change. Effective July 1, 2022, a one-time ad-hoc COLA of 3 percent of the base benefit was granted to eligible benefit recipients to begin on the anniversary of their retirement benefit in fiscal year 2023 as long as they retired prior to July 1, 2018. Effective July 1, 2023, a one-time ad-hoc COLA of 1 percent of the base benefit was granted to eligible benefit recipients to begin on the anniversary of their retirement benefit in fiscal year 2024 as long as they retired prior to July 1, 2019. Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 3307.67(E) the STRS Ohio Retirement Board may adjust the COLA upon a determination by the board's actuary that a change will not materially impair the fiscal integrity of the system or is necessary to preserve the fiscal integrity of the system. Eligibility changes will be phased in until August 1, 2023, when retirement eligibility for unreduced benefits will be five years of service credit and age 65, or 34 years of service credit at any age.

Eligibility changes for DB Plan members who retire with actuarially reduced benefits will be phased in until August 1, 2023, when retirement eligibility will be five years of qualifying service credit and age 60, or 30 years of service credit regardless of age.

The DC Plan allows members to place all their member contributions and 11.09 percent of the 14

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

percent employer contributions into an investment account. The member determines how to allocate the member and employer money among various investment choices offered by STRS. The remaining 2.91 percent of the 14 percent employer rate is allocated to the defined benefit unfunded liability. A member is eligible to receive a retirement benefit at age 50 and termination of employment. The member may elect to receive a lifetime monthly annuity or a lump sum withdrawal.

The Combined Plan offers features of both the DB Plan and the DC Plan. In the Combined Plan, 12 percent of the 14 percent member rate is deposited into the member's DC account and the remaining 2 percent is applied to the DB Plan. Member contributions to the DC Plan are allocated among investment choices by the member, and contributions to the DB Plan from the employer and the member are used to fund the defined benefit payment at a reduced level from the regular DB Plan. The defined benefit portion of the Combined Plan payment is payable to a member on or after age 60 with five years of service. The defined contribution portion of the account may be taken as a lump sum payment or converted to a lifetime monthly annuity at age fifty and after termination of employment.

New members who choose the DC plan or Combined Plan will have another opportunity to reselect a permanent plan during their fifth year of membership. Members may remain in the same plan or transfer to another STRS plan. The optional annuitization of a member's defined contribution account or the defined contribution portion of a member's Combined Plan account to a lifetime benefit results in STRS bearing the risk of investment gain or loss on the account. STRS has therefore included all three plan options as one defined benefit plan for GASB 68 reporting purposes.

A DB or Combined Plan member with five or more years of credited service who is determined to be disabled may qualify for a disability benefit. New members on or after July 1, 2013, must have at least ten years of qualifying service credit to apply for disability benefits. Members in the DC Plan who become disabled are entitled only to their account balance. Eligible survivors of members who die before service retirement may qualify for monthly benefits. If a member of the DC Plan dies before retirement benefits begin, the member's designated beneficiary is entitled to receive the member's account balance.

Funding Policy

Employer and member contribution rates are established by the State Teachers Retirement Board and limited by Chapter 3307 of the Ohio Revised Code. The 2024 employer and employee contribution rate of 14 percent was equal to the statutory maximum rates. For 2024, the full employer contribution was allocated to pension.

The COG's contractually required contribution to STRS was \$959,870 for fiscal year 2024.

Net Pension Liabilities, Pension Expense, and Deferred Outflows of Resources and Deferred Inflows of Resources Related to Pensions

The net pension liability was measured as of June 30, 2023, and the total pension liability used to calculate the net pension liability was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The COG's proportion of the net pension liability was based on the COG's share of contributions to the pension plan relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share:

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

	SERS	STRS	Total
Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability	\$8,131,381	\$10,071,096	\$18,202,477
Proportion of the Net Pension Liability:			
Current Measurement Date	0.14716060%	0.04676631%	
Prior Measurement Date	0.13023840%	0.03658162%	
Change in Proportionate Share	0.01692220%	0.01018469%	

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

SERS' total pension liability was determined by their actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 67, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each defined benefit retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment termination). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations. Future benefits for all current plan members were projected through 2137.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total pension liability in the latest actuarial valuation, prepared as of June 30, 2023 and compared with June 30, 2022, are presented below:

	June 30, 2023	June 30, 2022
Inflation	2.40%	2.40%
Future Salary Increases, including inflation	3.25% to 13.58%	3.25% to 13.58%
COLA or Ad Hoc COLA	2.00%, on or after April 1, 2018, COLAs for future retirees will be delayed for three years following commencement	2.00%, on or after April 1, 2018, COLAs for future retirees will be delayed for three years following commencement
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of system expenses	7.00% net of system expenses
Actuarial Cost Method	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)

Mortality rates were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weight Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20 percent for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35 percent for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
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For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3 percent for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8 percent for females. Future improvement in mortality rates is reflected by applying the MP-2020 projection scale generationally.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five-year period ended June 30, 2020.

The long-term return expectation for the Pension Plan Investments has been determined by using a building-block approach and assumes a time horizon, as defined in SERS' Statement of Investment Policy. A forecasted rate of inflation serves as the baseline for the return expectation. Various real return premiums over the baseline inflation rate have been established for each asset class. The long-term expected nominal rate of return has been determined by calculating an arithmetic weighted average of the expected real return premiums for each asset class, adding the projected inflation rate, and adding the expected return from rebalancing uncorrelated asset classes. As of June 30, 2023:

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Allocation</u>	<u>Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return</u>
Cash	2.00%	0.75%
US Equity	24.75%	4.82%
Non-US Equity Developed	13.50%	5.19%
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.75%	5.98%
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	19.00%	2.24%
Private Equity	12.00%	7.49%
Real Estate/Real Assets	17.00%	3.70%
Private Debt/Private Credit	5.00%	5.64%
Total	<u>100.00%</u>	

Discount Rate

The total pension liability for 2023 was calculated using the discount rate of 7.00 percent. The discount rate determination did not use a municipal bond rate. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that employers would contribute the actuarially determined contribution rate of projected compensation over the remaining 21-year amortization period of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability. The actuarially determined contribution rate for fiscal year 2023 was 14 percent. Projected inflows from investment earnings were calculated using the long-term assumed investment rate of return (7.00 percent). Based on those assumptions, the plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all future benefit payments of current plan members. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments was applied to all periods of projected benefits to determine the total pension liability. The annual money weighted rate of return, calculated as the internal rate of return on pension plan investments, for fiscal year 2023 was 6.90 percent.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate

Net pension liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate, and to illustrate the potential impact the following table presents the net pension liability calculated using the discount rate of 7.00 percent, as well as what each plan's net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00 percent), or one percentage point higher (8.00 percent) than the current rate.

	<u>1% Decrease 6.00%</u>	<u>Current Discount Rate 7.00%</u>	<u>1% Increase 8.00%</u>
Proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$12,001,503	\$8,131,381	\$4,871,541

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Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Report Date

Governor DeWine signed HB33 in July 2023 authorizing SERS to implement a Contribution Based Benefit Cap beginning August 1, 2024. Any effect on the net pension liability is unknown.

Actuarial Assumptions - STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2023, actuarial valuation compared to those used in the June 30, 2022, actuarial valuation are presented below:

	June 30, 2023	June 30, 2022
Inflation	2.50%	2.50%
Projected Salary Increases	From 2.50% to 8.50% based on service	From 2.50% to 8.50% based on age
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of investments expense, including inflation	7.00% net of investments expense, including inflation
Discount Rate of Return	7.00%	7.00%
Payroll Increases	3.00%	3.00%
Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)	0.00%	0.00%

Post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110 percent for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95 percent for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Disable Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2023, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

Asset Class	Target Allocation *	Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.60%
International Equity	22.00%	6.80%
Alternatives	19.00%	7.38%
Fixed Income	22.00%	1.75%
Real Estate	10.00%	5.75%
Liquidity Reserves	1.00%	1.00%
Total	100.00%	

* Final target weights reflected October 1, 2022.

** 10 year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
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2.25%, and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS' investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actuarial rate of return, without net value added by management.

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total pension liability was 7.00 percent as of June 30, 2023. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumes that member and employer contributions will be made at the statutory contribution rates in accordance with rate increases described above. For this purpose, only employer contributions that are intended to fund benefits of current plan members and their beneficiaries are included. Based on those assumptions, STRS' fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2023. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments of 7.00 percent was applied to all periods of projected benefit payment to determine the total pension liability as of June 30, 2023.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate

The following table presents the COG's proportionate share of the net pension liability calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00 percent, as well as what the COG's proportionate share of the net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one-percentage-point lower (6.00 percent) or one-percentage-point higher (8.00 percent) than the current rate:

	1% Decrease 6.00%	Current Discount Rate 7.00%	1% Increase 8.00%
Proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$15,487,116	\$10,071,096	\$5,490,624

Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Report Date

In March 2024, the STRS Board made the eligibility rule requiring 34 years of service for an unreduced retirement permanent, effective June 1, 2024. Eligibility for a reduced retirement benefit has been lowered from 30 to 29 years of service. The effect of these changes on the net pension liability is currently unknown.

Note 6 - Defined Benefit OPEB Plans

See Note 5 for a description of the net OPEB liability (asset).

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Health Care Plan Description

The COG contributes to the SERS Health Care Fund, administered by SERS for non-certificated retirees and their beneficiaries. For GASB 75 purposes, this plan is considered a cost-sharing other postemployment benefit (OPEB) plan. SERS' Health Care Plan provides healthcare benefits to eligible individuals receiving retirement, disability, and survivor benefits, and to their eligible dependents. Members who retire after June 1, 1986, need 10 years of service credit, exclusive of most types of purchased credit, to qualify to participate in SERS' health care coverage. The following types of credit purchased after January 29, 1981, do not count toward health care coverage eligibility: military, federal, out-of-state, municipal, private school, exempted, and early retirement incentive credit. In addition to age and service retirees, disability benefit recipients and beneficiaries who are receiving monthly benefits due to the death of a member or retiree, are eligible for SERS' health care coverage. Most

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retirees and dependents choosing SERS' health care coverage are over the age of 65 and therefore enrolled in a fully insured Medicare Advantage plan; however, SERS maintains a traditional, self-insured preferred provider organization for its non-Medicare retiree population. For both groups, SERS offers a self-insured prescription drug program. Health care is a benefit that is permitted, not mandated, by statute. The financial report of the Plan is included in the SERS Annual Comprehensive Financial Report which can be obtained on SERS' website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

The Health Care program is financed through a combination of employer contributions, recipient premiums, investment returns, and any funds received on behalf of SERS' participation in Medicare programs. The System's goal is to maintain a health care reserve account with a 20-year solvency period in order to ensure that fluctuations in the cost of health care do not cause an interruption in the program. However, during any period in which the 20-year solvency period is not achieved, the System shall manage the Health Care Fund on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Access to health care for retirees and beneficiaries is permitted in accordance with Section 3309 of the Ohio Revised Code. SERS' Retirement Board reserves the right to change or discontinue any health plan or program. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. The SERS Retirement Board established the rules for the premiums paid by the retirees for health care coverage for themselves and their dependents or for their surviving beneficiaries. Premiums vary depending on the plan selected, qualified years of service, Medicare eligibility, and retirement status.

Funding Policy

State statute permits SERS to fund the health care benefits through employer contributions. Each year, after the allocation for statutorily required pensions and benefits, the Retirement Board may allocate the remainder of the employer contribution of 14 percent of covered payroll to the Health Care Fund in accordance with the funding policy. For fiscal year 2024, no allocation was made to health care. An additional health care surcharge on employers is collected for employees earning less than an actuarially determined minimum compensation amount, pro-rated if less than a full year of service credit was earned. For fiscal year 2024, this amount was \$30,000. Statutes provide that no employer shall pay a health care surcharge greater than 2 percent of that employer's SERS-covered payroll; nor may SERS collect in aggregate more than 1.5 percent of the total statewide SERS-covered payroll for the health care surcharge. For fiscal year 2024, the COG's surcharge obligation was \$91,894.

The surcharge, added to the allocated portion of the 14.00% employer contribution rate is the total amount assigned to the Health Care Fund. The COG's contractually required contribution to SERS was \$91,894 for fiscal year 2024.

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description

The State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS) administers a cost-sharing Health Plan administered for eligible retirees who participated in the defined benefit or combined pension plans offered by STRS. Ohio law authorizes STRS to offer this plan. Benefits include hospitalization, physicians' fees, prescription drugs and partial reimbursement of monthly Medicare Part B premiums. Health care premiums were reduced by a Medicare Part B premium credit beginning in 2023. The Plan is included in the report of STRS which can be obtained by visiting www.strsoh.org or by calling (888) 227-7877.

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Funding Policy

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307 authorizes STRS to offer the Plan and gives the Retirement Board discretionary authority over how much, if any, of the health care costs will be absorbed by STRS. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. All benefit recipients pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. Under Ohio law, funding for post-employment health care may be deducted from employer contributions, currently 14 percent of covered payroll. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, STRS did not allocate any employer contributions to post-employment health care.

Net OPEB Liabilities (Assets), OPEB Expense (Income), and Deferred Outflows of Resources and Deferred Inflows of Resources Related to OPEB

The net OPEB liability (asset) was measured as of June 30, 2023, and the total OPEB liability used to calculate the net OPEB liability (asset) was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The COG's proportion of the net OPEB liability (asset) was based on the COG's share of contributions to the respective retirement systems relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share:

	<u>SERS</u>	<u>STRS</u>	<u>Total</u>
Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability	\$2,358,939	\$0	\$2,358,939
Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB (Asset)	0	(909,540)	(909,540)
Proportion of the Net OPEB Liability/Asset:			
Current Measurement Date	0.14318770%	0.04676631%	
Prior Measurement Date	<u>0.13339060%</u>	<u>0.03658162%</u>	
Change in Proportionate Share	0.00979710%	0.01018469%	

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

The total OPEB liability is determined by SERS' actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 74, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment terminations). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases, actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total OPEB liability in the latest actuarial valuation

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For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

date of June 30, 2023, compared with June 30, 2022, are presented below:

	June 30, 2023	June 30, 2022
Inflation	2.40%	2.40%
Future Salary Increases, Including Inflation	3.25% to 13.58%	3.25% to 13.58%
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of investment expense	7.00% net of investment expense, including inflation
Actuarial Cost Method	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)
Fiduciary Net Position is Projected to be Depleted	2048	2044
Municipal Bond Index Rate:		
Measurement Date	3.86%	3.69%
Prior Measurement Date	3.69%	1.92%
Single Equivalent Interest Rate (SEIR), net of plan investment expense, including price inflation:		
Measurement Date	4.27%	4.08%
Prior Measurement Date	4.08%	2.27%
Health Care Cost Trend Rate	6.75% to 4.40%	7.00% to 4.40%

Mortality rates among healthy retirees were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weighted Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20 percent for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35 percent for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3 percent for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8 percent for females. Mortality rates for contingent survivors were based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Contingent Survivor mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 105.5 percent for males and adjusted 122.5 percent for females. Mortality rates for actives is based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Employee mortality table. Mortality rates are projected using a fully generational projection with Scale MP-2020.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five-year period ended June 30, 2020.

The long-term expected rate of return on plan assets is reviewed as part of the actuarial five-year experience study. The most recent study covers fiscal years 2016 through 2020, and was adopted by the Board on April 15, 2021. Several factors are considered in evaluating the long-term rate of return assumption including long-term historical data, estimates inherent in current market data, and a long-normal distribution analysis in which best-estimate ranges of expected future real rates of return (expected return, net of investment expense and inflation) were developed by the investment consultant for each major asset class. These ranges were combined to produce the long-term expected rate of return, 7.00 percent, by weighting the expected future real rates of return by the target asset allocation percentage and then adding expected inflation. The assumption is intended to be a long-term assumption and is not expected to change absent a significant change in the asset allocation, a change in the inflation assumption, or a fundamental change in the market that alters expected returns in future years.

The long-term expected nominal rate of return has been determined by calculating a weighted average

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of the expected real return premiums for each asset class, adding the projected inflation rate, and adding the expected return from rebalancing uncorrelated asset classes. As of June 30, 2023:

Asset Class	Target Allocation	Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return
Cash	2.00%	0.75%
US Equity	24.75%	4.82%
Non-US Equity Developed	13.50%	5.19%
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.75%	5.98%
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	19.00%	2.24%
Private Equity	12.00%	7.49%
Real Estate/Real Assets	17.00%	3.70%
Private Debt/Private Credit	5.00%	5.64%
Total	100.00%	

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability at June 30, 2023, was 4.27 percent. The discount rate used to measure total OPEB liability prior to June 30, 2023, was 4.08 percent. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that contributions will be made from members and the System at the contribution rate of 1.50 percent of projected covered payroll each year, which includes a 1.50 percent payroll surcharge and no contributions from the basic benefits plan. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be depleted in 2048 by SERS' actuaries. The Fidelity General Obligation 20-year Municipal Bond Index Rate was used in the determination of the single equivalent interest rate for both the June 30, 2022, and the June 30, 2023, total OPEB liability. The Municipal Bond Index Rate is the single rate that will generate a present value of benefit payments equal to the sum of the present value determined by the long-term expected rate of return, and the present value determined by discounting those benefits after the date of depletion. The Municipal Bond Index Rate was 3.86 percent at June 30, 2023, and 3.69 percent at June 30, 2022.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate and Changes in the Health Care Cost Trend Rates

The net OPEB liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate and the health care cost trend rate. The following table presents the net OPEB liability of SERS, what SERS' net OPEB liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is 1 percentage point lower (3.27%) and higher (5.27%) than the current discount rate (4.27%). Also shown is what SERS' net OPEB liability would be based on health care cost trend rates that are 1 percentage point lower (5.75% decreasing to 3.40%) and higher (7.75% decreasing to 5.40%) than the current rate.

	1% Decrease (3.27%)	Current Discount Rate (4.27%)	1% Increase (5.27%)
Proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$3,015,399	\$2,358,939	\$1,841,293
	1% Decrease (5.75% decreasing to 3.40%)	Current Trend Rate (6.75% decreasing to 4.40%)	1% Increase (7.75% decreasing to 5.40%)
Proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$1,733,031	\$2,358,939	\$3,188,352

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Changes Between Measurement Date and Reporting Date

In September 2023, the SERS Board changed minimum compensation to \$30,000 from \$25,000 for purposes of the surcharge. Any effect on the net OPEB liability is unknown.

Actuarial Assumptions - STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2023, actuarial valuation compared to the prior year are presented below:

	June 30, 2023	June 30, 2022
Projected salary increases	Varies by service from 2.50% to 8.50%	Varies by service from 2.50% to 8.50%
Investment Rate of Return	7.00%, net of investment expenses, including inflation	7.00%, net of investment expenses, including inflation
Payroll Increases	3.00%	3.00%
Discount Rate of Return	7.00%	7.00%
Health Care Cost Trends:		
Medical		
Pre-Medicare	7.50% initial, 4.14% ultimate	7.50% initial, 3.94% ultimate
Medicare	-10.94% initial, 4.14% ultimate	-68.78% initial, 3.94% ultimate
Prescription Drug		
Pre-Medicare	-11.95% initial, 4.14% ultimate	9.00% initial, 3.94% ultimate
Medicare	1.33% initial, 4.14% ultimate	-5.47% initial, 3.94% ultimate

Projections of benefits include the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and retired plan members.

Healthy retirees post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110 percent for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020; pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95 percent for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. For disabled retirees, mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Disabled Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2023, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Allocation *</u>	<u>Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **</u>
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.60%
International Equity	22.00%	6.80%
Alternatives	19.00%	7.38%
Fixed Income	22.00%	1.75%
Real Estate	10.00%	5.75%
Liquidity Reserves	1.00%	1.00%
Total	<u>100.00%</u>	

* Final target weights reflected at October 1, 2022.

** 10 year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of 2.25%, and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS' investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actual rate of return, without net value added by management.

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability was 7.00 percent as of June 30, 2023. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed STRS continues to allocate no employer contributions to the health care fund. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2023. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on health care plan investments of 7.00 percent was applied to all periods of projected health care costs to determine the total OPEB liability as of June 30, 2023.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB (Asset) to Changes in the Discount and Health Care Cost Trend Rate

The following table represents the net OPEB asset as of June 30, 2023, calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00 percent, as well as what the net OPEB asset would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00 percent) or one percentage point higher (8.00 percent) than the current assumption. Also shown is the net OPEB asset as if it were calculated using health care cost trend rates that are one percentage point lower or one percentage point higher than the current health care cost trend rates.

	<u>1% Decrease (6.00%)</u>	<u>Current Discount Rate (7.00%)</u>	<u>1% Increase (8.00%)</u>
Proportionate share of the net OPEB (asset)	(\$769,807)	(\$909,540)	(\$1,031,233)
	<u>1% Decrease</u>	<u>Current Trend Rate</u>	<u>1% Increase</u>
Proportionate share of the net OPEB (asset)	(\$1,036,880)	(\$909,540)	(\$756,161)

Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Reporting date

In March, 2024, the STRS Board made changes to the eligibility for the maximum health care premium subsidy, going into effect initially with the January 2025 benefit. In May, 2024, the Board aligned the eligibility for the health care premium subsidy with the changes to pension eligibility made in March 2024. The effect on the net OPEB liability (asset) is unknown at this time.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024

Note 7 - Jointly Governed Organizations

Southwestern Ohio Computer Association

The Southwestern Ohio Computer Association (SWOCA) is a governmental jointly governed organization. SWOCA is an association of public school districts within the boundaries of Warren, Preble, and Butler counties and involves all cities that have school districts within these counties. The organization was formed for the purpose of applying modern technology with the aid of computers and other electronic equipment to administrative and instructional functions among member districts. SWOCA is governed by a board of directors consisting of one representative from each of the participating members. The COG paid SWOCA a fee for services provided during the year. Financial information may be obtained from Donna Davis Norris at SWOCA, 3611 Hamilton-Middletown Road, Hamilton, Ohio.

Note 8 – Contingencies

Litigation

The COG is not currently party to legal proceedings.

Note 9 – Implementation of New Accounting Principles

For fiscal year 2024, the COG implemented Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 100, Accounting Changes and Error Corrections; and portions of GASB Statement No. 99, Omnibus 2022.

GASB Statement No. 100 enhances accounting and financial reporting requirements for accounting changes and error corrections to provide more understandable, reliable, relevant, consistent, and comparable information for making decisions or assessing accountability. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 100 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

GASB Statement No. 99 addresses a variety of topics and includes clarification of provisions related to accounting and reporting of leases under GASB Statement No. 87, provides extension of the period which the London Interbank Offered Rate is considered appropriate benchmark interest rate, guidance on disclosure of nonmonetary transaction, accounting for pledges of future revenues when resources are not received by the pledging government under GASB Statement No. 48, and terminology updates related to certain provisions of GASB Statement No. 63 and No. 53. These topics under GASB Statement No. 99 provisions were implemented in a prior year.

Other topics in GASB Statement No. 99 includes classification of other derivative instruments within the scope of GASB Statement No. 53, clarification of provisions related to accounting and reporting of Public-Private and Public-Public Partnerships under GASB Statement No. 94, and clarification of provisions to accounting and reporting of subscription-based information technology arrangements under GASB Statement No. 96. These topics under GASB Statement No. 99 provisions were implemented and did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Net Position - Cash Basis
June 30, 2023

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Assets:	
Current Assets:	
Equity in Pooled Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,177,545
Total Assets	2,177,545
Net Position:	
Unrestricted	2,177,545
Total Net Position	\$2,177,545

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Changes in Net Position - Cash Basis
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Operating Receipts:	
Charges for Services	\$17,186,721
Total Operating Receipts	17,186,721
Operating Disbursements:	
Salaries	12,288,175
Fringe Benefits	3,683,694
Purchased Services	455,506
Materials and Supplies	932
Other Disbursements	207,959
Total Operating Disbursements	16,636,266
Operating Income (Loss)	550,455
Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses):	
Investment Earnings	29,280
Total Non-Operating Revenues (Expenses)	29,280
Change in Net Position	579,735
Net Position - Beginning of Year	1,597,810
Net Position - End of Year	\$2,177,545

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Statement of Cash Flows - Cash Basis
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

	Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Cash Flows from Operating Activities:	
Cash Received from Member Districts	\$17,186,721
Cash Payments to Employees	(12,288,175)
Cash Payments to Fringe Benefits	(3,683,694)
Cash Payments to Suppliers	(455,506)
Cash Payments for Materials and Supplies	(932)
Cash Payments for Other Disbursements	(207,959)
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	550,455
	<hr/>
Cash Flows from Investing Activities:	
Earnings on Investments	29,280
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Cash Flows from Investing Activities	29,280
	<hr/>
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	579,735
	<hr/>
Cash and Cash Equivalents Beginning of Year	1,597,810
	<hr/>
Cash and Cash Equivalents End of Year	2,177,545
	<hr/> <hr/>
Reconciliation of Operating Income (Loss) to	
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	
Operating Income (Loss)	550,455
	<hr/>
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities	\$550,455
	<hr/> <hr/>

See accompanying notes to the basic financial statements.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Note 1 - Description of the COG and Reporting Entity

Description of the COG

The Southwest Ohio Council of Governments (the "COG"), is a body Corporate and Politic established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Chapter 167, by agreement of its members. The COG is a jointly governed organization of the Warren County Educational Service Center and the Warren County Commissioners. The COG is currently providing services for eighteen member school districts and other entities in southwest Ohio, principally providing substitute teachers and substitute classified personnel. Warren County Educational Service Center acts as a fiscal officer for the COG.

The governing authority of Southwest Ohio Council of Governments (COG) is the COG Board, which is comprised of five board members. There are three Warren County ESC representatives including the treasurer, and two Warren County Commissioner representatives. The Warren County ESC superintendent is the current board president. The Officer positions of the COG Board are President and Treasurer.

Reporting Entity

A reporting entity is comprised of the primary government, component units, and other organizations that are included to ensure that the financial statements are not misleading. The primary government of the COG consists of all funds, departments, boards, and agencies that are not legally separate from the COG. For the COG, this is the general operation.

Component units are legally separate organizations for which the COG is financially accountable. The COG is financially accountable for an organization if the COG appoints a voting majority of the organization's governing board and (1) the COG is able to significantly influence the programs or services performed or provided by the organization; or (2) the COG is legally entitled to or can otherwise access the organization's resources; the COG is legally obligated or has otherwise assumed the responsibility to finance the deficits of, or provide financial support to, the organization; or the COG is obligated for the debt of the organization. Component units may also include organizations that are fiscally dependent on the COG in that the COG approves the budget, the issuance of debt, or the levying of taxes. The COG has no component units.

Note 2 - Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

These financial statements are presented on a cash basis of accounting. The cash basis of accounting differs from accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) include all relevant Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) pronouncements, which have been applied to the extent they are applicable to the cash basis of accounting. Following are the more significant of the COG's accounting policies:

Basis of Presentation

The COG's basic financial statements consist of a statement of net position – cash basis, a statement of receipts, disbursements, and changes in net position – cash basis, and a statement of cash flows – cash basis.

The COG uses a single enterprise presentation for its financial records. Enterprise reporting focuses on the determination of operating income, changes in net position and financial position.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Measurement Focus

The COG uses a cash basis of accounting for reporting purposes. Receipts are recognized when they are received, and disbursements are recognized when they are paid.

Basis of Accounting

The COG's financial statements are prepared using the cash basis of accounting. Receipts are recorded in the COG's financial records and reported in the financial statements when cash is received rather than when earned and disbursements are recorded when cash is paid rather than when the liability is incurred.

As a result of the cash basis of accounting, certain assets and their related receipts (such as accounts receivable and receipt billed for provided services not yet collected) and certain liabilities (such as accounts payable and disbursements for goods or services received but not yet paid, and accrued disbursements and liabilities) are not recorded in these financial statements. If the COG utilized the basis of accounting recognized as generally accepted, the fund and all government-wide financial statements would be presented on the accrual basis of accounting.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

To improve cash management, cash received by the COG is pooled. Monies for all funds are maintained in this pool. Individual fund integrity is maintained through COG records. Each fund's interest in the pool is presented as "Equity in Pooled Cash and Cash Equivalents" on the financial statements.

Following Ohio statutes, the Board of Directors has, by resolution, specified the funds to receive an allocation of interest earnings. No interest receipts were credited during Fiscal Year 2022.

Capital Assets

Acquisitions of property, plant and equipment are recorded as disbursements when paid. The financial statements do not report these assets.

Net Position

Net position is reported as restricted when there are limitations imposed on their use either through the enabling legislation adopted by the COG or through external restrictions imposed by creditors, grantors or laws, or regulations of other governments.

The COG applies restricted resources when a disbursement is incurred for purposes for which both restricted and unrestricted net position are available.

Operating Receipts and Disbursements

Operating receipts are those receipts that are generated directly from the primary activity of the COG. Operating disbursements are necessary costs incurred to provide the good or service that is the primary activity of the COG. All receipts and disbursements not meeting this definition are reported as non-operating.

Pensions/Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB)

For purposes of measuring the net pension/OPEB liability (asset), information about the fiduciary net position of the pension/OPEB plans and additions to/deductions from their fiduciary net position have been determined on the same basis as they are reported by the pension/OPEB plan. For this purpose, benefit payments (including refunds of employee contributions) are recognized when due and payable in accordance with the benefit terms. The pension/OPEB plans report investments at fair value.

Note 3 - Deposits and Investments

State statutes classify monies held by the COG into three categories.

Active deposits are public deposits necessary to meet current demands on the treasury. Such monies must be maintained either as cash in the COG Treasury, in commercial accounts payable or withdrawable on demand, including negotiable order of withdrawal (NOW) accounts, or in money market deposit accounts.

Inactive deposits are public deposits that the Board has identified as not required for use within the current five year period of designation of depositories. Inactive deposits must be either evidenced by certificates of deposit maturing not later than the end of the current period of designation of depositories, or by savings or deposit accounts including, but not limited to, passbook accounts.

Interim deposits are deposits of interim moneys. Interim moneys are those moneys which are not needed for immediate use but which will be needed before the end of the current period of designation of depositories. Interim deposits must be evidenced by time certificates of deposit maturing not more than one year from the date of deposit or by savings accounts including passbook accounts.

Protection of the COG's deposits is provided by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), by eligible securities pledged by the financial institution as security for repayment, or by the financial institutions participation in the Ohio Pooled Collateral System (OPCS), a collateral pool of eligible securities deposited with a qualified trustee and pledged to the Treasurer of State to secure the repayment of all public monies deposited in the financial institution.

Interim monies may be deposited or invested in the following securities:

1. United States Treasury Notes, Bills, Bonds, or any other obligation or security issued by the United States Treasury or any other obligation guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States.
2. Bonds, notes, debentures, or any other obligations or securities issued by any federal government agency or instrumentality, including but not limited to, the Federal National Mortgage Association, Federal Home Loan Bank, Federal Farm Credit Bank, Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, Government National Mortgage Association, and Student Loan Marketing Association. All federal agency securities shall be direct issuances of federal government agencies or instrumentalities.
3. Written repurchase agreements in the securities listed above, provided that the fair value of the securities subject to the repurchase agreement must exceed the principal value of the agreement by at least two percent and be marked to fair value daily, and that the term of the agreement must not exceed thirty days.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

4. Bonds and other obligations of the State of Ohio, and with certain limitations including a requirement for maturity within ten years from the date of settlement, bonds and other obligations of political subdivisions of the State of Ohio, if training requirements have been met.
5. No-load money market mutual funds consisting exclusively of obligations described in division (1) or (2) of this section, and repurchase agreements secured by such obligations, provided that investments in securities described in this division are made only through eligible institutions.
6. The State Treasurer's investment pool (STAR Ohio).
7. Certain bankers' acceptance for a period not to exceed one hundred eighty days and commercial paper notes (for a period not to exceed two hundred seventy days) in an amount not to exceed 40 percent of the interim monies available for investment at any one time if training requirements have been met
8. Under limited circumstances, corporate debt interests rated in either of the two highest rating classifications by at least two nationally recognized rating agencies.

Investments in stripped principal or interest obligations, reverse repurchase agreements, and derivatives are prohibited. The issuance of taxable notes for the purpose of arbitrage, the use of leverage, and short selling are also prohibited. Except as noted above, an investment must mature within five years from the date of purchase unless matched to a specific obligation or debt of the COG, and must be purchased with the expectation that it will be held to maturity.

Investments may only be made through specified dealers and institutions. Payment for investments may be made only upon delivery of the securities representing the investments to the Fiscal officer or qualified trustee or, if the securities are not represented by a certificate, upon receipt of confirmation of transfer from the custodian.

Deposits

Custodial credit risk for deposits is the risk that in the event of bank failure, the COG will not be able to recover deposits or collateral securities that are in the possession of an outside party. At June 30, 2023, the carrying amount of all COG deposits was \$1,177,116. As of June 30, 2023, the COG's bank balance of \$1,368,553 was covered by FDIC or collateralized as discussed below.

The COG has no deposit policy for custodial risk beyond the requirements of State statute. Ohio law requires that deposits either be insured or be protected by:

Eligible securities pledged to the COG and deposited with a qualified trustee by the financial institution as security for repayment whose market value at all times shall be at least 105 percent of the deposits being secured; or

Participation in the Ohio Pooled Collateral System (OPCS), a collateral pool of eligible securities deposited with a qualified trustee and pledged to the Treasurer of State to secure the repayment of all public monies deposited in the financial institution. OPCS requires the total market value of the securities pledged to be 102% of the deposits being secured or a rate set by the Treasurer of State.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Investments

As of June 30, 2023, the COG had \$1,000,434 invested in StarOhio.

Note 4 - Risk Management

The COG is exposed to various risks of loss related to torts, theft of, damage to and destruction of assets, errors and omissions, injuries to employees and natural disasters. The COG carries insurance coverage with Wright Insurance Company

Limits and deductible amounts for the above policies vary accordingly.

<u>COVERAGE</u>	<u>LIMITS</u>	<u>DEDUCTIBLE</u>
Educators Legal Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence \$3,000,000 general aggregate	\$2,500 each wrongful act
General Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence \$3,000,000 general aggregate	

The COG pays the State of Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation System a premium based on a rate per \$100 of salaries. This rate is calculated based on accident history and administrative costs.

Settled claims have not exceeded the commercial coverage in any of the past three years. There have been no significant reductions in insurance coverage from last year.

Note 5 - Defined Benefit Pension Plans

The Statewide retirement systems provide both pension benefits and other postemployment benefits (OPEB).

Net Pension Liability/Net OPEB Liability (Asset)

Pensions and OPEB are a component of exchange transactions—between an employer and its employees—of salaries and benefits for employee services. Pensions/OPEB are provided to an employee—on a deferred-payment basis—as part of the total compensation package offered by an employer for employee services each financial period.

The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) represent the COG's proportionate share of each pension/OPEB plan's collective actuarial present value of projected benefit payments attributable to past periods of service, net of each pension/OPEB plan's fiduciary net position. The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) calculation is dependent on critical long-term variables, including estimated average life expectancies, earnings on investments, cost of living adjustments and others. While these estimates use the best information available, unknowable future events require adjusting these estimates annually.

Ohio Revised Code limits the COG's obligation for this liability to annually required payments. The COG cannot control benefit terms or the manner in which pensions/OPEB are financed; however, the COG does receive the benefit of employees' services in exchange for compensation including pension and OPEB.

GASB 68/75 assumes the liability is solely the obligation of the employer, because (1) they benefit from employee services; and (2) State statute requires funding to come from these employers. All pension

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

contributions to date have come solely from these employers (which also includes pension costs paid in the form of withholdings from employees). The retirement systems may allocate a portion of the employer contributions to provide for these OPEB benefits. In addition, health care plan enrollees pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. State statute requires the retirement systems to amortize unfunded pension liabilities within 30 years. If the pension amortization period exceeds 30 years, each retirement system's board must propose corrective action to the State legislature. Any resulting legislative change to benefits or funding could significantly affect the net pension/OPEB liability (asset). Resulting adjustments to the net pension/OPEB liability (asset) would be effective when the changes are legally enforceable. The Ohio revised Code permits, but does not require the retirement systems to provide healthcare to eligible benefit recipients.

The net pension/net OPEB liability (asset) are not reported on the face of the financial statements, but rather are disclosed in the notes because of the use of the cash basis framework.

The remainder of this note includes the required pension disclosures. See Note 6 for the required OPEB disclosures.

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Plan Description

COG non-teaching employees participate in SERS, a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan administered by SERS. SERS provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits, and death benefits to plan members and beneficiaries. Authority to establish and amend benefits is provided by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3309. SERS issues a publicly available, stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information and detailed information about SERS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by visiting the SERS website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

Age and service requirements for retirement are as follows:

	Eligible to Retire on or before August 1, 2017 *	Eligible to Retire on or after August 1, 2017
Full Benefits	Any age with 30 years of service credit	Age 67 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 57 with 30 years of service credit
Actuarially Reduced Benefits	Age 60 with 5 years of service credit Age 55 with 25 years of service credit	Age 62 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 60 with 25 years of service credit

* Members with 25 years of service credit as of August 1, 2017, will be included in this plan.

Annual retirement benefits are calculated based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service; 2.20% for the first thirty years of service and 2.50% for years of service credit over 30. Final average salary is the average of the highest three years of salary.

An individual whose benefit effective date is before April 1, 2018, is eligible for a cost of living adjustment (COLA) on the first anniversary date of the benefit. New benefit recipients must wait until the fourth anniversary of their benefit for COLA eligibility. The COLA is added each year to the base benefit amount on the anniversary date of the benefit. The COLA is indexed to the percentage increase in the CPI-W, not to exceed 2.50% and with a floor of 0.00%. A three-year COLA suspension was in effect

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

for all benefit recipients for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Retirement Board approved a 0.50% COLA for calendar year 2021 and 2.5% for 2022 and 2023.

Funding Policy

Plan members are required to contribute 10.00% of their annual covered salary and the COG is required to contribute 14.00% of annual covered payroll. The contribution requirements of plan members and employers are established and may be amended by the SERS' Retirement Board up to statutory maximum amounts of 10.00% for plan members and 14.00% for employers. The Retirement Board, acting with the advice of the actuary, allocates the employer contribution rate among four of the System's funds (Pension Trust Fund, Death Benefit Fund, Medicare B Fund, and Health Care Fund). For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, the allocation to pension, death benefits, and Medicare B was 14.00%. For fiscal year 2023, the Retirement Board did not allocate any employer contribution to the Health Care Fund.

The COG's contractually required contribution to SERS was \$817,355 for fiscal year 2023.

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description

COG licensed teachers and other faculty members participate in STRS Ohio, a cost-sharing multiple employer public employee system administered by STRS. STRS provides retirement and disability benefits to members and death and survivor benefits to beneficiaries. STRS issues a stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information, and detailed information about STRS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by writing to STRS, 275 E. Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215-3771, by calling (888) 227-7877, or by visiting the STRS Web site at www.strsoh.org.

New members have a choice of three retirement plans; a Defined Benefit (DB) Plan, a Defined Contribution (DC) Plan, and a Combined Plan. Benefits are established by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307.

The DB plan offers an annual retirement allowance based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service. Effective August 1, 2015, the calculation is 2.2% of final average salary for the five highest years of earnings multiplied by all years of service. In April 2017, the Retirement Board made the decision to reduce COLA granted on or after July 1, 2017, to 0.0% upon a determination by its actuary that it was necessary to preserve the fiscal integrity of the retirement system. Benefit recipients' base benefit and past cost-of living increases are not affected by this change. Effective July 1, 2022, an ad-hoc COLA of 3.0% of the base benefit was granted to eligible benefit recipients to begin on the anniversary of their retirement benefit in fiscal year 2023 as long as they retired prior to July 1, 2018. Eligibility changes will be phased in until August 1, 2023, when retirement eligibility for unreduced benefits will be five years of service credit and age 65, or 35 years of service credit and at least age 60.

Eligibility changes for DB Plan members who retire with actuarially reduced benefits will be phased in until August 1, 2023, when retirement eligibility will be five years of qualifying service credit and age 60, or 30 years of service credit regardless of age.

The DC Plan allows members to place all their member contributions and 9.53% of the 14.0% employer contributions into an investment account. The member determines how to allocate the member and employer money among various investment choices offered by STRS. The remaining 4.47% of the 14.0%

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

employer rate is allocated to the defined benefit unfunded liability. A member is eligible to receive a retirement benefit at age 50 and termination of employment. The member may elect to receive a lifetime monthly annuity or a lump sum withdrawal.

The Combined Plan offers features of both the DB Plan and the DC Plan. In the Combined Plan, 12.0% of the 14.0% member rate is deposited into the member's DC account and the remaining 2.0% is applied to the DB Plan. Member contributions to the DC Plan are allocated among investment choices by the member, and contributions to the DB Plan from the employer and the member are used to fund the defined benefit payment at a reduced level from the regular DB Plan. The defined benefit portion of the Combined Plan payment is payable to a member on or after age 60 with five years of service. The defined contribution portion of the account may be taken as a lump sum payment or converted to a lifetime monthly annuity at age fifty and after termination of employment.

New members who choose the DC plan or Combined Plan will have another opportunity to reselect a permanent plan during their fifth year of membership. Members may remain in the same plan or transfer to another STRS plan. The optional annuitization of a member's defined contribution account or the defined contribution portion of a member's Combined Plan account to a lifetime benefit results in STRS bearing the risk of investment gain or loss on the account. STRS has therefore included all three plan options as one defined benefit plan for GASB 68 reporting purposes.

A DB or Combined Plan member with five or more years of credited service who is determined to be disabled may qualify for a disability benefit. New members on or after July 1, 2013, must have at least ten years of qualifying service credit that apply for disability benefits. Members in the DC Plan who become disabled are entitled only to their account balance. Eligible survivors of members who die before service retirement may qualify for monthly benefits. If a member of the DC Plan dies before retirement benefits begin, the member's designated beneficiary is entitled to receive the member's account balance.

Funding Policy

Employer and member contribution rates are established by the State Teachers Retirement Board and limited by Chapter 3307 of the Ohio Revised Code. The fiscal year 2023 employer and employee contribution rate of 14.00% was equal to the statutory maximum rates. For fiscal year 2023, the full employer contribution was allocated to pension.

The COG's contractually required contribution to STRS was \$881,017 for fiscal year 2023.

Net Pension Liability

The net pension liability was measured as of June 30, 2022, and the total pension liability used to calculate the net pension liability was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The COG's proportion of the net pension liability was based on the COG's share of contributions to the pension plan relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share:

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

	SERS	STRS	Total
Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability	\$7,044,306	\$8,132,140	\$15,176,446
Proportion of the Net Pension Liability:			
Current Measurement Date	0.13023840%	0.03658162%	
Prior Measurement Date	0.11885860%	0.02787945%	
Change in Proportionate Share	0.01137980%	0.00870217%	

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

SERS' total pension liability was determined by their actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 67, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each defined benefit retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment termination). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total pension liability in the latest actuarial valuation, prepared as of June 30, 2021, are presented below:

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2021
Inflation	2.40%	2.40%
Future Salary Increases, including inflation	3.25% to 13.58%	3.25% to 13.58%
COLA or Ad Hoc COLA	2.00%, on or after April 1, 2018, COLAs for future retirees will be delayed for three years following commencement	2.00%, on or after April 1, 2018, COLAs for future retirees will be delayed for three years following commencement
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of system expenses	7.00% net of system expenses
Actuarial Cost Method	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)

Mortality rates were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weight Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20% for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35% for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3% for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8% for females. Future improvement in mortality rates is reflected by applying the MP-2020 projection scale generationally.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five year period ended June 30, 2020.

The long-term return expectation for the Pension Plan Investments has been determined by using a building-block approach and assumes a time horizon, as defined in SERS' *Statement of Investment Policy*. A forecasted rate of inflation serves as the baseline for the return expectation. Various real return premiums over the baseline inflation rate have been established for each asset class. The long-term expected nominal rate of return has been determined by calculating an arithmetic weighted average of the expected real return premiums for each asset class, adding the projected inflation rate, and adding the expected return from rebalancing uncorrelated asset classes.

Asset Class	Target Allocation	Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return
Cash	2.00%	-0.45%
US Equity	24.75%	5.37%
Non-US Equity Developed	13.50%	6.22%
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.75%	8.22%
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	19.00%	1.20%
Private Equity	11.00%	10.05%
Real Estate/Real Assets	16.00%	4.87%
Multi-Asset Strategy	4.00%	3.39%
Private Debt/Private Credit	3.00%	5.38%
Total	100.00%	

Discount Rate

The total pension liability for 2022 was calculated using the discount rate of 7.00%. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed the contributions from employers and from the members would be computed based on contribution requirements as stipulated by State statute. Projected inflows from investment earnings were calculated using the long-term assumed investment rate of return (7.00%). Based on those assumptions, the plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all future benefit payments of current plan members. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments was applied to all periods of projected benefits to determine the total pension liability.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate

Net pension liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate, and to illustrate the potential impact the following table presents the net pension liability calculated using the discount rate of 7.00%, as well as what each plan's net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00%), or one percentage point higher (8.00%) than the current rate.

	1% Decrease 6.00%	Current Discount Rate 7.00%	1% Increase 8.00%
Proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$10,368,882	\$7,044,306	\$4,243,396

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Actuarial Assumptions - STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2022, actuarial valuation compared to those used in the June 30, 2021, actuarial valuation are presented below:

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2021
Inflation	2.50%	2.50%
Projected Salary Increases	From 2.50% to 12.50% based on age	12.50% at age 20 to 2.50% at age 65
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of investments expense, including inflation	7.00% net of investments expense, including inflation
Discount Rate of Return	7.00%	7.00%
Payroll Increases	3.00%	3.00%
Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)	0.00%	0.00%

For 2022, post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110.0% for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95.0% for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Disable Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

For 2021, post-retirement mortality rates are based on RP-2014 Annuitant Mortality Table with 50.0% of rates through age 69, 70.0% of rates between ages 70 and 79, 90.0% of rates between ages 80 and 84, and 100.0% of rates, thereafter, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on RP-2014 Employee Mortality Table, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on the RP-2014 Disabled Mortality Table with 90.0% of rates for males and 100.0% of rates for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2022, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Allocation *</u>	<u>Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **</u>
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.60%
International Equity	22.00%	6.80%
Alternatives	19.00%	7.38%
Fixed Income	22.00%	1.75%
Real Estate	10.00%	5.75%
Liquidity Reserves	1.00%	1.00%
Total	<u>100.00%</u>	

* Target allocation percentage is effective July 1, 2022. Target weights were phased in over a 3 month period concluding on October 1, 2022.

** 10 year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of 2.25%, and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS' investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actuarial rate of return, without net value added by management.

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total pension liability was 7.00% as of June 30, 2022. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumes that member and employer contributions will be made at the statutory contribution rates in accordance with rate increases described above. For this purpose, only employer contributions that are intended to fund benefits of current plan members and their beneficiaries are included. Based on those assumptions, STRS' fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2022. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments of 7.00% was applied to all periods of projected benefit payment to determine the total pension liability as of June 30, 2022.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate

The following table presents the District's proportionate share of the net pension liability calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00%, as well as what the District's proportionate share of the net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one-percentage-point lower (6.00%) or one-percentage-point higher (8.00%) than the current rate:

	<u>1% Decrease 6.00%</u>	<u>Current Discount Rate 7.00%</u>	<u>1% Increase 8.00%</u>
Proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$12,284,703	\$8,132,140	\$4,620,357

Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Reporting date

Demographic assumptions were changed based on the actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2021.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Note 6 - Defined Benefit OPEB Plans

The net OPEB liability (asset) is disclosed as a commitment and not reported on the face of the financial statements as a liability or asset because of the use of the cash basis framework.

See Note 5 for a description of the net OPEB liability (asset).

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Health Care Plan Description

The COG contributes to the SERS Health Care Fund, administered by SERS for non-certificated retirees and their beneficiaries. For GASB 75 purposes, this plan is considered a cost-sharing other postemployment benefit (OPEB) plan. SERS' Health Care Plan provides healthcare benefits to eligible individuals receiving retirement, disability, and survivor benefits, and to their eligible dependents. Members who retire after June 1, 1986, need 10 years of service credit, exclusive of most types of purchased credit, to qualify to participate in SERS' health care coverage. The following types of credit purchased after January 29, 1981 do not count toward health care coverage eligibility: military, federal, out-of-state, municipal, private school, exempted, and early retirement incentive credit. In addition to age and service retirees, disability benefit recipients and beneficiaries who are receiving monthly benefits due to the death of a member or retiree, are eligible for SERS' health care coverage. Most retirees and dependents choosing SERS' health care coverage are over the age of 65 and therefore enrolled in a fully insured Medicare Advantage plan; however, SERS maintains a traditional, self-insured preferred provider organization for its non-Medicare retiree population. For both groups, SERS offers a self-insured prescription drug program. Health care is a benefit that is permitted, not mandated, by statute. The financial report of the Plan is included in the SERS Annual Comprehensive Financial Report which can be obtained on SERS' website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

Access to health care for retirees and beneficiaries is permitted in accordance with Section 3309 of the Ohio Revised Code. The Health Care Fund was established and is administered in accordance with Internal Revenue Code Section 105(e). SERS' Retirement Board reserves the right to change or discontinue any health plan or program. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. The SERS Retirement Board established the rules for the premiums paid by the retirees for health care coverage for themselves and their dependents or for their surviving beneficiaries. Premiums vary depending on the plan selected, qualified years of service, Medicare eligibility, and retirement status.

Funding Policy

State statute permits SERS to fund the health care benefits through employer contributions. Each year, after the allocation for statutorily required pensions and benefits, the Retirement Board may allocate the remainder of the employer contribution of 14.00% of covered payroll to the Health Care Fund in accordance with the funding policy. For fiscal year 2023, no allocation was made to health care. An additional health care surcharge on employers is collected for employees earning less than an actuarially determined minimum compensation amount, pro-rated if less than a full year of service credit was earned. For fiscal year 2023, this amount was \$25,000. Statutes provide that no employer shall pay a health care surcharge greater than 2.00% of that employer's SERS-covered payroll; nor may SERS collect in aggregate more than 1.50% of the total statewide SERS-covered payroll for the health care surcharge. For fiscal year 2023, the COG's surcharge obligation was \$60,214.

The surcharge, added to the allocated portion of the 14.00% employer contribution rate is the total amount assigned to the Health Care Fund. The COG's contractually required contribution to SERS was \$60,214 for fiscal year 2023.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description

The State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS) administers a cost-sharing Health Plan administered for eligible retirees who participated in the defined benefit or combined pension plans offered by STRS. Ohio law authorizes STRS to offer this plan. Benefits include hospitalization, physicians' fees, prescription drugs and partial reimbursement of monthly Medicare Part B premiums. The Plan is included in the report of STRS which can be obtained by visiting www.strsoh.org or by calling (888) 227-7877.

Funding Policy

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307 authorizes STRS to offer the Plan and gives the Retirement Board discretionary authority over how much, if any, of the health care costs will be absorbed by STRS. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. All benefit recipients pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. Under Ohio law, funding for post-employment health care may be deducted from employer contributions, currently 14.00% of covered payroll. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, STRS did not allocate any employer contributions to post-employment health care.

Net OPEB Liability (Asset)

The net OPEB liability (asset) was measured as of June 30, 2022, and the total OPEB liability used to calculate the net OPEB liability (asset) was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The COG's proportion of the net OPEB liability (asset) was based on the COG's share of contributions to the respective retirement systems relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability	\$1,872,818	\$0	\$1,872,818
Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB (Asset)	0	(947,220)	(947,220)
Proportion of the Net Pension Liability/Asset:			
Current Measurement Date	0.13339060%	0.03658162%	
Prior Measurement Date	0.11739160%	0.02787945%	
Change in Proportionate Share	0.01599900%	0.00870217%	

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

The total OPEB liability is determined by SERS' actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 74, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment terminations). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases, actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total OPEB liability in the latest actuarial valuation date of June 30, 2022, compared with June 30, 2021, are presented below:

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2021
Inflation	2.40%	2.40%
Future Salary Increases, Including Inflation		
Wage Increases	3.25% to 13.58%	3.25% to 13.58%
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of investment expense, including inflation	7.00% net of investment expense, including inflation
Fiduciary Net Position is Projected to be Depleted	2044	2044
Municipal Bond Index Rate:		
Measurement Date	3.69%	1.92%
Prior Measurement Date	1.92%	2.45%
Single Equivalent Interest Rate (SEIR), net of plan investment expense, including price inflation:		
Measurement Date	4.08%	2.27%
Prior Measurement Date	2.27%	2.63%
Health Care Cost Trend Rate:		

Mortality rates among healthy retirees were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weighted Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20% for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35% for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3% for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8% for females. Mortality rates for contingent survivors were based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Contingent Survivor mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 105.5% for males and adjusted 122.5% for females. Mortality rates for actives is based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Employee mortality table.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five year period ended June 30, 2020.

The long-term expected rate of return on plan assets is reviewed as part of the actuarial five-year experience study. The most recent study covers fiscal years 2016 through 2020, and was adopted by the Board in 2021.

Several factors are considered in evaluating the long-term rate of return assumption including long-term historical data, estimates inherent in current market data, and a long-normal distribution analysis in which best-estimate ranges of expected future real rates of return were developed by the investment

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

consultant for each major asset class. These ranges were combined to produce the long-term expected rate of return, 7.00%, by weighting the expected future real rates of return by the target asset allocation percentage and then adding expected inflation. The capital market assumptions developed by the investment consultant are intended for use over a 10-year horizon and may not be useful in setting the long-term rate of return for funding pension plans which covers a longer timeframe. The assumption is intended to be a long-term assumption and is not expected to change absent a significant change in the asset allocation, a change in the inflation assumption, or a fundamental change in the market that alters expected returns in future years.

The target asset allocation and best estimates of arithmetic real rates of return for each major asset class, as used in the June 30, 2020 five-year experience study, are summarized as follows:

Asset Class	Target Allocation	Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return
Cash	2.00%	-0.45%
US Equity	24.75%	5.37%
Non-US Equity Developed	13.50%	6.22%
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.75%	8.22%
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	19.00%	1.20%
Private Equity	11.00%	10.05%
Real Estate/Real Assets	16.00%	4.87%
Multi-Asset Strategy	4.00%	3.39%
Private Debt/Private Credit	3.00%	5.38%
Total	100.00%	

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability at June 30, 2022 was 4.08%. The discount rate used to measure total OPEB liability prior to June 30, 2021, was 2.27%. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that contributions will be made from members and the System at the contribution rate of 1.50% of projected covered payroll each year, which includes a 1.50% payroll surcharge and no contributions from the basic benefits plan. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to become insufficient to make all projected future benefit payments of current System members by SERS actuaries. The Municipal Bond Index Rate is used in the determination of the SEIR for both the June 30, 2022, and the June 30, 2021 total OPEB liability. The Municipal Bond Index rate is the single rate that will generate a present value of benefit payments equal to the sum of the present value determined by the long-term expected rate of return, and the present value determined by discounting those benefits after the date of depletion. The Municipal Bond Index Rate is 3.69% at June 30, 2022 and 1.92% at June 30, 2021.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate and Changes in the Health Care Cost Trend Rates

The net OPEB liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate and the health care cost trend rate. The following table presents the net OPEB liability of SERS, what SERS' net OPEB liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is 1 percentage point lower (3.08%) and higher (5.08%) than the current discount rate (4.08%). Also shown is what SERS' net OPEB liability would be based on health care cost trend rates that are 1 percentage point lower (6.00% decreasing to 3.40%) and higher (8.00% decreasing to 5.40%) than the current rate.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

	1% Decrease (3.08%)	Current Discount Rate (4.08%)	1% Increase (5.08%)
Proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$2,326,068	\$1,872,818	\$1,506,922
	1% Decrease (6.00% decreasing to 3.40%)	Current Trend Rate (7.00% decreasing to 4.40%)	1% Increase (8.00% decreasing to 5.40%)
Proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$144,279	\$1,872,818	\$2,432,560

Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Reporting date

The discount rate changed from 2.27% to 4.08% and the health care trend rates were updated.

Actuarial Assumptions - STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2022, actuarial valuation and the June 30, 2021 actuarial valuation are presented below:

	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2021
Projected salary increases	Varies by service from 2.50% to 8.50%	Varies by service from 2.50% to 12.50%
Investment Rate of Return	7.00%, net of investment expenses, including inflation	7.00%, net of investment expenses, including inflation
Payroll Increases	3.00%	3.00%
Discount Rate of Return	7.00%	7.00%
Health Care Cost Trends:		
Medical		
Pre-Medicare	7.50% initial, 3.94% ultimate	5.00% initial, 4.00% ultimate
Medicare	-68.78% initial, 3.94% ultimate	-16.18% initial, 4.00% ultimate
Prescription Drug		
Pre-Medicare	9.00% initial, 3.94% ultimate	6.50% initial, 4.00% ultimate
Medicare	-5.47% initial, 3.94% ultimate	29.98% initial, 4.00% ultimate

Projections of benefits include the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and retired plan members.

For 2022, healthy retirees post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110.0% for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020; pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95.0% for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. For disabled retirees, mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Disabled Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

For 2021, healthy retirees the mortality rates are based on the RP-2014 Annuitant Mortality Table with 50.0% of rates through age 69, 70.0% of rates between ages 70 and 79, 90.0% of rates between ages 80 and 84, and 100.0% of rates thereafter, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

scale MP-2016. For disabled retirees, mortality rates are based on the RP-2014 Disabled Mortality Table with 90.0% of rates for males and 100.0% of rates for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2022, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

Asset Class	Target Allocation *	Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.60%
International Equity	22.00%	6.80%
Alternatives	19.00%	7.38%
Fixed Income	22.00%	1.75%
Real Estate	10.00%	5.75%
Liquidity Reserves	1.00%	1.00%
Total	100.00%	

* Target allocation percentage is effective as of July 1, 2022. Target weights will be phased in over a 3-month period concluding on October 1, 2022.

** 10 year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of 2.25%, and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS' investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actual rate of return, without net value added by management.

Discount Rate

The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability was 7.00% as of June 30, 2022. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed STRS continues to allocate no employer contributions to the health care fund. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2022. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on health care plan investments of 7.00% was applied to all periods of projected health care costs to determine the total OPEB liability as of June 30, 2022.

Sensitivity of the Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB (Asset) to Changes in the Discount and Health Care Cost Trend Rate

The following table represents the net OPEB asset as of June 30, 2022, calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00%, as well as what the net OPEB asset would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00%) or one percentage point higher (8.00%) than the current assumption. Also shown is the net OPEB asset as if it were calculated using health care cost trend rates that are one percentage point lower or one percentage point higher than the current health care cost trend rates.

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

	1% Decrease (6.00%)	Current Discount Rate (7.00%)	1% Increase (8.00%)
Proportionate share of the net OPEB (asset)	(\$875,680)	(\$947,220)	(\$1,008,500)
	1% Decrease	Current Trend Rate	1% Increase
Proportionate share of the net OPEB (asset)	(\$982,497)	(\$947,220)	(\$902,691)

Changes Between the Measurement Date and the Reporting date

Salary increase rates were updated based on the actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2021 and were changed from age based to service based. Healthcare trends were updated to reflect emerging claims and recoveries experience.

Note 7 - Jointly Governed Organizations

Southwestern Ohio Computer Association

The Southwestern Ohio Computer Association (SWOCA) is a governmental jointly governed organization. SWOCA is an association of public school districts within the boundaries of Warren, Preble, and Butler counties and involves all cities that have school districts within these counties. The organization was formed for the purpose of applying modern technology with the aid of computers and other electronic equipment to administrative and instructional functions among member districts. SWOCA is governed by a board of directors consisting of one representative from each of the participating members. The COG paid SWOCA a fee for services provided during the year. Financial information may be obtained from Donna Davis Norris at SWOCA, 3611 Hamilton-Middletown Road, Hamilton, Ohio.

Note 8 – Contingencies

Litigation

The COG is not currently party to legal proceedings.

Note 9 – Implementation of New Accounting Principles

For fiscal year 2023, the COG implemented Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 91, Conduit Debt Obligations; GASB Statement No. 94, Public-Private and Public-Public Partnerships and Availability Payment Arrangements; GASB Statement No. 96, Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITAs); and portions of GASB Statement No. 99, Omnibus 2022.

GASB Statement No. 91 clarifies the definition of a conduit debt obligation, establishing that a conduit debt obligation is not a liability of the issuer; establishes standards for accounting and financial reporting of additional commitments and voluntary commitments extended by issuers and arrangements associated with conduit debt obligations; and improves required note disclosures. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 91 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

GASB Statement No. 94 primary objective is to improve financial reporting by addressing issues related to public-private and public-public partnership arrangements (PPPs). As used in this Statement, a PPP is an arrangement in which a government (the transferor) contracts with an operator (a governmental or

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County
Notes to the Basic Financial Statements
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

nongovernmental entity) to provide public services by conveying control of the right to operate or use a nonfinancial asset, such as infrastructure or other capital asset (the underlying PPP asset), for a period of time in an exchange or exchange-like transaction. Some PPPs meet the definition of a service concession arrangement (SCA), which the Board defines in this Statement as a PPP in which (1) the operator collects and is compensated by fees from third parties; (2) the transferor determines or has the ability to modify or approve which services the operator is required to provide, to whom the operator is required to provide the services, and the prices or rates that can be charged for the services; and (3) the transferor is entitled to significant residual interest in the service utility of the underlying PPP asset at the end of the arrangement.

GASB Statement No. 94 also provides guidance for accounting and financial reporting for availability payment arrangements (APAs). As defined in this Statement, an APA is an arrangement in which a government compensates an operator for services that may include designing, constructing, financing, maintaining, or operating an underlying nonfinancial asset for a period of time in an exchange or exchange-like transaction. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 94 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

GASB Statement No. 96 provides guidance on the accounting and financial reporting for subscription-based information technology arrangements (SBITAs) for government end users (governments). This Statement (1) defines a SBITA; (2) establishes that a SBITA results in a right-to-use subscription asset—an intangible asset—and a corresponding subscription liability; (3) provides the capitalization criteria for outlays other than subscription payments, including implementation costs of a SBITA; and (4) requires note disclosures regarding a SBITA. To the extent relevant, the standards for SBITAs are based on the standards established in Statement No. 87, *Leases*, as amended. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 96 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

GASB Statement No. 99 addresses a variety of topics and includes clarification of provisions related to accounting and reporting of leases under GASB Statement No. 87, provides extension of the period which the London Interbank Offered Rate is considered appropriate benchmark interest rate, guidance on disclosure of nonmonetary transaction, accounting for pledges of future revenues when resources are not received by the pledging government under GASB Statement No. 48, and terminology updates related to certain provisions of GASB Statement No. 63 and No. 53. These topics under GASB Statement No. 99 provisions were implemented and did not have an effect on the financial statements of the COG.

Other topics in GASB Statement No. 99 includes classification of other derivative instruments within the scope of GASB Statement No. 53, clarification of provisions related to accounting and reporting of Public-Private and Public-Public Partnerships under GASB Statement No. 94, and clarification of provisions to accounting and reporting of subscription-based information technology arrangements under GASB Statement No. 96. These topics are effective for future fiscal years and have not been implemented by of the COG.

Note 10 – COVID-19

The United States and the State of Ohio declared a state of emergency in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ohio's state of emergency ended in June of 2021 while the national state of emergency ended in April 2023.

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS
REQUIRED BY GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS**

Southwest Ohio Council of Governments
Warren County
1879 Deerfield Road
Lebanon, Ohio 45036

To the Board of Directors:

We have audited, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to the financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*), the cash-basis financial statements of the Southwest Ohio Council of Governments, Warren County, (the Council) as of and for the years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the Council's basic financial statements and have issued our report thereon dated March 4, 2025, wherein we noted the Council uses a special purpose framework other than generally accepted accounting principles.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered the Council's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purposes of expressing our opinion on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the Council's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified.

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Council's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Purpose of this Report

This purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Council's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.



Keith Faber
Auditor of State
Columbus, Ohio
March 4, 2025

OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER



SOUTHWEST OHIO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

WARREN COUNTY

AUDITOR OF STATE OF OHIO CERTIFICATION

This is a true and correct copy of the report, which is required to be filed pursuant to Section 117.26, Revised Code, and which is filed in the Office of the Ohio Auditor of State in Columbus, Ohio.



Certified for Release 3/20/2025

65 East State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-466-4514 or 800-282-0370

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at
www.ohioauditor.gov