



**Minutes of the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority Investment Board Regular Meeting**

OTTA Investment Board Meeting – Thursday, November 13, 2025

Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St., 19<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1952, Columbus, OH 43215

**CALL TO ORDER:** 9:59 AM

Chair Jim Benson brought the meeting to order. Ms. Amy Lyle conducted a roll call and announced a quorum was present.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

**Executive Investment Board Members:** James Benson, Anne Womer Benjamin, Scott Brihn, Michelle Chavanne, and Mick Zwayer.

**Legislative Investment Board Members:** Senator Jane Timken, Senator Catherine Ingram, and Representative Beryl Brown Piccolantontio.

**Ohio Tuition Trust Authority (OTTA) Staff:** Trisha Good, Executive Director; Amy Manett, Chief Financial Officer; Dave Kemp, Director of Customer Service and Operations; Ben Gibbons, Director of Marketing; Shreekanth Chutkay, Director of Information Technology; Jeff Fogel, Assistant General Counsel ODHE; Mark Smith, OH-TECH; and Amy Lyle, Board Secretary.

**Others present:** In person: Stephen DiGirolamo, Wilshire; and Heather Buchanan, Ohio Attorney General. Online: John Park, Mark DiSipio, and Stephen Jagard, BlackRock; Judy Cunningham and Jamie Fellrath, OTTA.

This meeting was properly noticed in accordance with the provisions of Ohio Administrative Code §3334-1-02, adopted in accordance with Section 111.1.15 of the Ohio Revised Code.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

OTTA Investment Board (Board) Chair James Benson asked for any questions or comments on the Board minutes of the August 14, 2025, Board meeting. There were none. Mr. Benson called for a vote to approve the minutes. Mr. Mick Zwayer made a motion to approve. Ms. Michelle Chavanne seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. Ms. Ann Womer Benjamin and Mr. Scott Brihn abstained. The motion was unanimously approved.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AGENDA AND MEETING OVERVIEW**

Ms. Trisha Good welcomed the newest Board member, Mr. Scott Brihn. Ms. Good then reviewed the agenda starting with Mr. Stephen DiGirolamo, who will present Wilshire's recommendation of changing the asset allocation mix of Advantage Age-Based Portfolio (AABP), on which the Board will vote (FY26-01). Then Mr. Jeff Fogle will review OTTA's recommendation for the continuation of the Fifth Third partnership. Ms. Good will follow with agency updates. Ms. Amy Manett will cover the program's quarterly financial update. Mr. Jeff Fogel will share legislative and legal updates. Then Mr. John Park, Mr. Mark DiSipio, and Mr. Stephen Jagard will share the annual BlackRock presentation online as the manager of Ohio's 529 Advisor program, BlackRock CollegeAdvantage 529. Mr. Steven DiGirolamo will then discuss Wilshire's quarterly updates on Direct and Advisor Plans' performances and how the current markets are affecting the plans.

**AABP ASSET ALLOCATION**

Mr. DiGirolamo started with an explanation of Advantage-Age Based Portfolios to the Board, and Wilshire's role in crafting its glide paths. Wilshire is recommending a reweighting in the public equality allocation. Currently, the AABP is equally weighted between U.S. and international equity investments; Wilshire is recommending that the AABP move towards market adjusted weighting of 65% U.S. to 35% non-US equities. All the individual funds within those two asset classes will be weighted the same. The reweighting will bring the AABP in-line with current 529 industry standards. Wilshire is

comfortable with other asset allocations. If the change is approved by the Board, Wilshire will work with Vanguard to implement the allocation reweighting at the beginning of this year or within the first quarter of 2026. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Benson asked for a vote on Wilshire's AABP Asset Allocation recommendations. Mr. Mick Zwayer made a motion to approve the Resolution FY26-01. Ms. Ann Womer-Benjamin seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **FIFTH THIRD CONTRACT RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Jeff Fogle described the evergreen contract with Fifth Third Bank, which automatically renews each year unless the Board decides not to continue the partnership. OTTA recommends that the Board allow the contract to be renewed. If the Board chooses not to renew the contract, OTTA will need to give Fifth Third 180 days' notice. If the Board would like the contract to continue, no action is necessary.

Ms. Good discussed the value of OTTA's relationship with Fifth Third Bank for the past 20 years. Fifth Third Bank was brought on as a partner after closure of Guaranteed 529 Savings Plan. This relationship gives Ohio Direct 529 a distinct advantage as there is only one other 529 state program that offers CDs. Ohio Direct 529 account owners who save in the Fifth Third CDs or saving account are not charged any fees and have the benefit of FDIC insurance. Mr. Ben Gibbons added that the higher rates on the short-term CDs have been a valuable tool for promoting Ohio 529 to parents and grandparents who want peace of mind with their savings. Ms. Good concluded that OTTA highly recommends the continuation of the Fifth Third partnership, which is exclusive for both partners. Discussion ensued. No action was taken.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Ms. Good presented that Ohio remains the seventh largest 529 state-sponsored program in the nation with record total assets of \$20.32 billion Assets Under Management (AUM) as of September 30, 2025, with 11.2% increase year over year (YOY). The Ohio Direct 529 Plan is seventh in the nation out of 61 other Direct Plans, with \$12.7 AUM, with a 12.7% increase YOY. The BlackRock Ohio Advisor Plan is the fifth largest in the nation with \$7.5 billion AUM with an 8.8% increase YOY.

The Ohio Direct 529 Program retained its silver ranking from Morningstar for the thirteenth year. The BlackRock Ohio Advisor 529 Plan retained its silver ranking from Morningstar for the second year. This makes Ohio the only state program with both their Direct and Advisor 529 Plans ranked in a silver or higher. In other industry rankings, Saving For College gave the Ohio Direct 529 Plan 4.5 out of 5 graduation caps. The Ohio Advisor 529 Plan received a 5 out of 5 graduation caps.

Ms. Good next shared that on Dec. 5, the Vanguard Ohio Target Enrollment Portfolio (TEP) will add 2044/2045 Fund and roll over the 2024/2025 Fund to the Commencement Fund. OTTA is working with Vanguard and Ascensus for a smooth transition. Also, with the Board's approval of the AABP Asset Allocation change, OTTA will work with Wilshire and Vanguard to reweigh the equities mix at the beginning of January 2026, or at the close of the first quarter. Another upcoming project is the updating of the Offering Statement and Program Disclosure, to be available at the end of this fiscal year. OTTA would like to bring on an outside 529 legal expert to review the document to make sure it meets the current industry standards. Mr. Benson agreed with external legal review recommendation. Discussion ensued.

### **Financial update**

Ms. Amy Manett shared the AUM percentage change for the Direct Plan was 12.7% from September 2025 over September 2024. For the Advisor Plan, the increase was 8.8%. Ms. Manett showed how the increases can be broken down based on net flows and then on market performance. For the Direct Plan, contributions were up 6% YOY and the Advisor Plan was up 10.5%. Direct Plan distributions were 11.6% higher YOY and the Advisor Plan was 1.0% higher.

For the Guaranteed 529 plan, OTTA implemented asset allocation change as voted on by the board in August. All equity exposure was eliminated. There is \$35 million in Actuarial Present Value with under 3,500 accounts being serviced. With the annual 28 and over and small balance payouts, OTTA is expecting to service under 3,000 accounts at the start of 2026. Distributions are down 66% YOY, which was expected as in 2025, the Roth IRA rollover option was announced.

There are no concerns regarding revenue. Effective Dec. 1, the administration fee will be reduced to 9 basis points as OTTA reached new larger AUM number. The reduction will be passed on to customers.

The Ohio Direct 529, the BlackRock Ohio Advisor 529 Plan, the Guaranteed 529 Plan, and OTTA administration were all audited and received unqualified opinions, meaning there are no issues of non-compliance.

### **Legislative updates**

Mr. Fogel stated that Ohio House Bill 48 is still in committee. It would open the tax deduction to \$8,000 for married couples filing jointly. Additionally, national 529 organizations like CSPN are reviewing information on Trump accounts, and how it will compare to a 529 account. Industry lawyers are still discussing the logistics behind Roth IRA rollovers. Lastly, Mr. Fogel stated that the Board's annual ethics training is due by the end of the year. Discussion ensued.

### **BLACKROCK ANNUAL PRESENTATION**

Mr. John Park, the head of College Savings at BlackRock, started the organization's annual presentation with Mr. Mark DiSipio and Mr. Stephen Jagard adding to the conversation.

Mr. Park first spoke on the market updates and BlackRock's outlook. Despite all the economic impacts of geopolitical fragmentations, tariffs, government shutdown, and expanded use of AI, 2025 has been a strong year for BlackRock Advisor 529 Plan, which reached an all-time high AUM and continued to be rated a Silver program by Morningstar. BlackRock also onboarded additional distribution partners.

Mr. Jagard then shared how the Advisor Plan has grown over the past few years. Through the third quarter of 2026, BlackRock has had \$394M in gross sales and has added 13,768 new accounts. BlackRock sees a strong correlation between the new omnibus partners with the plan growth. There are already 112 Registered Investment Advisors partners on the omnibus platform and BlackRock is in contractual negotiations with Schwab and Cetera. There are additional RIAs with whom BlackRock is discussing omnibus plans.

Mr. DiSipio shared how BlackRock's marketing efforts are on track to have their best year. BlackRock's email and marketing campaigns to advisors broaden awareness of the CollegeAdvantage 529 and showed advisors how 529 plans can apply to all types of clients. Another strategy was to include insider articles in the organization's newsletter, focusing on the themes of the 529 tax advantages, saving strategies, strategic withdrawal plans in saving in a 529 account. BlackRock sales teams visited advisors to talk about 529 tax benefits. The sales desk engaged in call campaign to additional advisors to discuss the recent 529 changes through the passage of H.R. 1 and to offer a 529 continuing education seminar. Lastly, BlackRock had a sales-driven email campaign to share new 529 resources, such as information on the expansion of 529 uses with H.R. 1, estate planning tax benefits to grandparents and accelerated 529 gifting. Mr. DiSipio also shared that there was a 30% increase YOY in the 529 Web unique visitors. He then highlighted BlackRock's marketing efforts through LinkedIn and TikTok. For 2026, BlackRock plans to revamp 529 landing page.

Mr. Jagard next discussed that BlackRock will create new continuing education presentation on 529s for affluent clients to reach new advisors with additional information on estate planning and minimizing education costs by saving in a 529 account.

Mr. Park asked the Board if there were any questions. Discussion ensued. Mr. Benson thanked the BlackRock team for the presentation.

### **WILSHIRE QUARTERLY UPDATE**

Mr. DiGirolamo started his presentation by sharing that U.S. equities are up 8% for the third quarter and around 14% year to date. The trend has been positively influenced by the Fed interest rate cuts, AI- and tech-related spending. IT and communication services sectors are the top performers this quarter with the health care and materials sectors pulling back.

Non-U.S. equities are up 7% for the third quarter and up around 24% year to date. Central banks rate cuts in developed countries have helped. As for bond prices, there is no real change in the yield curve, which has allowed for nice returns. Wilshire is expecting continued market volatility for rest of year, with another potential Fed rate cut occurring in December.

#### **Direct Plan Performance**

For both the Direct and Advisor Plans, Wilshire has no concerns with any of the funds. For the AABP, there are all positive returns, with the age bands with more equity doing better. The Vanguard Ohio TEP also has all positive returns, with the age bands with more equity doing better. The risk-based portfolios have had good returns, with the more aggressive ones with higher equity performing better. The actively managed individual funds have struggled with market volatility.

#### **Advisor Plan Performance**

Mr. DiGirolamo stated that BlackRock age-based glidepaths have done well against industry peers as the BlackRock funds contain more equity. The risk-based funds and most of the individual options are also performing well. The funds that are actively managed are underperforming; however, Wilshire has no major concerns with them. Discussion ensued.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

#### **ADJOURN**

Sen. Jane Timken made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Zwayer seconded the motion. A unanimous voice vote was taken. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Signed by:

Print name: 

Date: 2/12/24