

March 29, 2017

Testimony before the House Finance Committee

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you in support of Ohio's public schools. My name is Ann Shelly, and I am here to briefly share why I believe that public School funding must be maintained at the current level of funding or even increased.

I am a lifelong educator, having taught at the middle and high school levels and, for much of my career, I have worked with teacher preparation programs in higher education. My children graduated from the Ohio public schools three decades ago. I believe that the needs of children and young people are of paramount importance to the development of a strong, literate, citizenship-focused population for the state of Ohio.

As a teacher and teacher educator, I have spent over 50 years in the public schools. I have seen firsthand the dedication of teachers, administrators, and support staff. I have watched children glow with the joy of learning and weep with frustration over the many challenges they face in school and in their lives..

There are a number of challenges in the current budget. The testing process has become so extensive and so intensive that schools have become testing grounds for much of the school year. Children are stressed by the frequency and vital importance of testing and test results. With the federal legislation, ESSA, states have a chance to review what they do and how they do it. The money spent on testing is a huge demand on the already strapped school budgets. The State Superintendent's decision to delay filing Ohio's state plan is a bright light in this frustrating year.

The growth of charter/community schools and on-line schools has funneled off money that is badly needed to meet the needs of children without requiring real, strong accountability measures for those organizations. The possibility of increasing the voucher program without suitable accountability measures leaves us with the possibility leaving so many children behind is difficult to justify to the citizens of our state.

Our culture has left schools with challenges related to increasing poverty, growing hopelessness, and issues related to health and nutrition that are superseded by the opioid epidemic that is the scourge of our cities, towns and of the state. The Executive Budget's School Funding Impacts: nearly half of school districts that could see cuts under the budget's school funding proposals, according to estimates

included in Office of Budget & Management spreadsheets. Under this budget plan, schools that lose more than 5% of their populations will see their funding reduced. Meanwhile, districts with no enrollment declines or declines of less than 5% will receive the same amount of core funding as in Fiscal Year 2017. Teachers and education advocates have decried proposed budget changes that would create a slash-and-burn effect on many school districts. The state budget doesn't provide enough money for school transportation and makes cuts to tangible personal property tax reimbursements. According to the Columbus Dispatch, the proposed budget caps funding to school districts that need extra money to educate growing student populations, cuts districts that can't afford it, and leaves most career-technical schools and all educational service centers with less money. Legislators have heard considerable testimony from groups from all over the state groups opposed to inadequate funding for education.

Higher Ed Leaders: Budget Places 'Undue Burden' On Institutions:

Higher education leaders on Tuesday told a House panel that, under the executive budget, institutions will suffer and the state won't move closer to reaching its degree attainment goal. Budget provisions placing a freeze on tuition and fees, increasing state share of instruction by just 1% each year, and requiring that institutions cover student textbook costs are all areas of concern for university presidents who testified before the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education. The challenge here on specific to public school teachers. We are facing a shortage in a number of licensure areas and colleges and universities are facing cutbacks in the very programs that provide the badly needed teachers.

There is nothing more important to parents, caregivers, educators and the public than a healthy, well-educated, well-prepared citizenry. Our constitution states this quite clearly: "The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a **thorough and efficient system of common schools** throughout the state; but no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state." Please use this authority to review the funding for our common schools. Thank you for allowing me to present this appeal.