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Testimony on HB 166

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Thank you Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in favor of the proposals generated by the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding Plan. My name is Tom Hosler, Superintendent of Perrysburg School District. I have been a superintendent for 20 years, with 13 in my current position and 7 years prior to that in Michigan. As an educator, I have experience in both public and Catholic Schools in Ohio and Michigan. I am currently the Chair of the Alliance for High Quality Education, member of the BASA Executive Committee and I have been co-chair with Akron Public Schools CFO Ryan Pendelton for the base costs subcommittee as a member of the Cupp-Patterson Workgroup for the past 18 months. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute in this process. I have never been more excited and hopeful about the future of Ohio's educational system.

Last month, Representatives Cupp and Patterson introduced the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan – a bold initiative to address Ohio's broken school funding system that has been decades in the making. It is important to first understand how our current system fails the children of Ohio. The current model is not based on the programs and services students and local communities need to succeed. Instead, it is a system that lacks transparency and continues to create a complex, self-defeating patchwork of funding for schools. As you can see on slide 2 of our handout, there are

currently 610 public school districts in Ohio. Of those, 503 are funded outside the formula. In other words, 82% of all of Ohio's school districts are either "capped," meaning they do not receive the full funding the formula requires, or are on the "guarantee," which means these districts receive more funding than what the formula requires.

The failures of today's Ohio funding formula cut across school district lines; it fails children in urban, suburban, small, large and rural districts across the state.

Today, the "base" funding for a student in Ohio is \$6,020. There is no rational way to explain how we as a state arrived at this number. And, that is wrong.

The proposed Ohio Fair School Funding Plan is based on the actual costs of an Ohio education using best practices from our state and nationally-recognized research. Also, this plan eliminates artificial caps and reduces the number of school districts on an artificial guarantee. Most importantly, it targets the most essential components in the educational process – students and the classroom. Under the proposed plan shown in the chart on slide 4, it drives 75% of state funding directly to the classroom for instruction and for instructional and student supports. How we arrive at the new base cost per pupil fits on a single page with a line-by-line, transparent and research-based accounting of how school districts are funded. This plan recognizes what is needed to meet students where they are and provide them with the experiences and supports they need to achieve their greatest potential. It is also designed to help students with special needs and mental health concerns, address the impact of poverty, enhance safety and security, expand quality preschool opportunities, put more technology in the hands of Ohio's students, provide

essential services for high poverty school districts and reflect the real cost of operating Ohio public schools.

Fair school funding will better prepare our state and local workforce to be more competitive in the nation and the world.

It also respects a long-standing tradition of local control while providing a framework for future Legislators and Educators to collaborate to address specific funding needs such as nurses, mental health services or transportation.

In Ohio there are 610 unique school districts, ranging from serving as few as five students to more than 50,000. Finding a perfect funding formula to meet each of those school districts' unique needs is a challenging feat. The Fair School Funding Plan provides a framework to address each Ohio school districts' needs better than anything we have seen or had before.

For too long in Ohio, the current funding formula has become a tool that has divided the educational community. Capped vs. guarantee, rural vs. urban, wealthy vs. poor and charter vs. traditional. The process Representatives Cupp and Patterson initiated involved eight superintendents and eight treasurers from across the state, representing large urbans, suburbans, rural, rural poor, small city, career tech centers, poor and wealthy districts. Like Representatives Cupp and Patterson, these educators worked across school district lines and focused on what matters most – Ohio's students.

We must stop with the “them and us” mentality that has both divided and paralyzed anyone who has tried to address the state funding formula problem. We owe it to the next generation of Ohio students to work together.

Mr. Chairman, I would again like to thank you for this opportunity. I would like conclude with an important number – 2031. No, it is not my debit card pin number. This number, 2031, above all others in this process, has driven our workgroup’s efforts. Across Ohio today, students in kindergarten will be graduating in the year 2031. What will those students say about our efforts today? Will they say we had the courage to do what we know is right? The Fair School Funding Plan provides each of Ohio’s unique school districts and legislators with a framework to build upon in the future. If this plan does not move forward, there is no alternative other than the broken patchwork that continues to fail Ohio’s students today and those students in the Class of ’31.