

Interested Party Testimony, H.B. No. 166
Ohio House of Representatives, Finance Committee
Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. No. 166. Specifically, I would like to focus my comments on K-12 school funding in the State Operating Budget.

My name is Elizabeth Brown. I am a member of Columbus City Council and Chair of the Education Committee. In this capacity, I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the Columbus Department of Education to expand access for Columbus children to participate in high-quality early childhood education opportunities.

This work provides an important foundation for a healthy community by preparing our youth for success in school and throughout their lives. We know that children who participate in high-quality early education have significantly improved early literacy, language, and math skills.

We do our best to help Columbus students enter kindergarten prepared to succeed, but we rely on our partners at Columbus City Schools and the vital support they receive through state funding to provide for the ongoing education of students. It takes a coordinated approach from all levels of government to help fulfill the mission of Columbus City Schools to ensure each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

When we help Columbus City Schools successfully achieve that goal for every student, we help build stronger and healthier communities in Columbus.

One of the most fundamental ways to support the success of not only Columbus City Schools, but every school district in Ohio, is equitable funding for students. It is no secret that this has been an ongoing challenge for Ohio going back to the *DeRolph v. State* decision and beyond. In Columbus, our schools have too often suffered from inadequate per-pupil funding from the state. This is especially challenging for a large district like Columbus City Schools because of the education and support needs that our schools must meet.



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Given this challenge, I want to thank Representative Cupp and Representative Patterson for putting forward the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan as a foundation for school funding reform. By attempting to address the needs of both large urban districts like Columbus City Schools as well as smaller and rural districts throughout the state, the plan represents a step forward.

However, there is more work to be done to ensure that the plan adequately accounts for unique challenges faced by Columbus City Schools and other urban districts in the state. These challenges include population and poverty density, the local cost of living and its impact on salaries and the overall base cost for school operations, the health and wellness needs of students, and a long term strategy for funding Ohio's largest districts like Columbus City Schools.

I understand that the State Operating Budget is scheduled to move to the Ohio Senate in the very near future and that the opportunity for further amendments is limited, but I sincerely encourage ongoing work with groups like the Ohio 8 Coalition on the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding Plan as the budget moves forward. Implementing long needed school funding reform that provides equitable state funding for every district in Ohio will help strengthen our communities in Columbus and throughout the entire state.

Our schools are underfunded and for the sake of our kids today and our future economy we must do better. I urge the state to not only find ways to provide more funds for Columbus City Schools and K-12 education, but also to appropriately fund and support the early education needs of children under five.

Respectfully submitted,

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