

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Scherer , Ranking Member Cera and members of the Committee, my name is Doug Ute. I am the superintendent of the Newark city Schools in Licking county, . and a member of the Executive Committee of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), where I currently serve as the Association President.

For the past 33 years, I have served as an educator in four Ohio school districts as a teacher, an athletic administrator, a high school principal and for 19 years as a superintendent.

For the past two years, I have had the privilege of being a part of the Fair Funding WorkGroup, established by Representatives Cupp and Patterson, serving as a Co-Chair of the Economically Disadvantaged and Preschool SubGroup along with my colleague, Claudia Zaler.

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the Committee, my name is Claudia Zaler, I am the Treasurer/ CFO of the Waverly City Schools in Pike County. Prior to working with the school district, I was a fiscal specialist with the Scioto County Community Action organization and a public accountant. While I am not a native of Ohio, I have always been a small town girl where everyone knows everyone and come together like family to solve community problems, just as 16 dedicated educators have come together for the last two years to form the Fair Funding Workgroup. Doug and I appreciate this opportunity to testify regarding the Economically Disadvantaged and Preschool portions of HB 305.

These two topics were considered within the same subgroup because the need to provide economically disadvantaged children with additional support to prepare them for school has been well-documented over the years by a number of credible research projects.

Since the release of the landmark Coleman Report in 1966 it has been widely understood that poverty and student achievement are strongly and negatively correlated. Ohio's school funding formula has provided additional funding for districts with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students since the mid-1970's.

More recent studies by Syracuse University, the Education Trust and the State of California indicate that schools with high concentrations of the economically disadvantaged require an additional 30% of additional resources per pupil compared to the school's base cost per pupil in order to properly prepare a child living in poverty. Unfortunately, like many other elements of Ohio's current funding formula, the State's funding of the economically disadvantaged population appears to have no foundation in objectively determined, needs-based standards, and, in any event does not approach the recommended 30% additional funding level. As a condition of receiving economically disadvantaged aid, schools are restricted to a list of specific expenditure categories for which that money can be spent. We refer you to a handout which shows the current list of expenditures. You will notice that this list does not include expenditures for social or emotional support services or for reductions in class size.

After ongoing input by advocacy groups and individual school districts reporting on their specific program, we anticipate amending HB 305 by inserting language included in the handout entitled “Proposed Modification and Approved Expenditures.

With regard to current and proposed funding levels, we invite you to the two handouts titled, “Current Calculations to Determine Current Maximum Disadvantaged Funding” and “HB 305 Maximum Economically Disadvantaged Funding.”

PRESCHOOL

Research overwhelmingly indicates that a high quality preschool experience is beneficial to children as they enter kindergarten, especially young people who are economically disadvantaged. Ohio currently has a fragmented delivery system of preschool services with providers funded by Head Start, ODJFS (the Public Funded Childcare program) and ODE (Early Childhood Education Grants and Preschool special education services). Additionally, each of the above-mentioned programs has different eligibility criteria (Head Start uses 100% of the federal poverty level, ODJFS uses 130% of the federal poverty level and ODE uses 200% of the federal poverty level, while the preschool special education service has no income criteria).

HB 305 calls for every 4-year-old identified economically disadvantaged to have at least one year of high quality preschool and that identification activities be enhanced to guarantee that opportunity for all those who should qualify.

Also, therefore, HB 305 calls for the General Assembly to authorize and fund a thorough, independent study to investigate and develop recommendations regarding the following:

If it is prudent and cost-effective to continue to provide state supported preschool programs through the existing multi-provider system, and if so, how that system can be better coordinated and become more cost efficient; if not, how can the State best supply these services especially to three- and four-year-olds that are economically disadvantaged.

The best method for identifying all economically disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds in order to ensure that all qualified children are provided access to high quality preschool programs.

The appropriate per pupil funding amount required to provide essential services for economically disadvantaged children and the appropriate services and/or resources upon which those dollars should be spent.

The potential benefit of developing a structure whereby most, if not all, state services for economically disadvantaged children, regardless of what agency is currently

responsible for those services, are located in public school facilities to take advantage of the 180 days per year that all such children who are of school age are reliably available for the delivery of those services. The intent would be to eliminate duplication, generate significant dollar savings for the State and provide families assurances that necessary services will be readily available and troublesome transportation and other inconveniences substantially reduced.

And analysis of the budgets, structure, services and funding of all state agencies that regularly provide services to school age and preschool age children (ODE, OJFS, health, mental health, etc.) to determine the most effective methods for coordinating these services, improving their quality and accessibility, and making the best use of allocated state dollars.