

Chairman Cupp, Chairman Patterson, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for hearing me today.

My name is Jocelyn Spencer Rhynard, and I am the Vice President of the Board of Education of the Dayton City School District. I am here on behalf of my board and superintendent to speak about the Fair School Funding Plan.

I would first like to commend Representatives Cupp and Patterson for addressing the issue of school funding in Ohio. The current funding model is imperfect and there is broad consensus among our legislators and the general public that the issues raised by the DeRolph ruling must be corrected.

I would also like to thank Representatives Cupp and Patterson for approaching the topic with a deep understanding of education, poverty, and the inequalities between many of our school districts. I was heartened to read on page 3 of the plan that “voters are concerned about the so-called ‘typical’ child, but they also want children with physical, mental and emotional needs, children who are high achievers or possess special talents, and children who are from lower socioeconomic households to receive additional, necessary assistance as well.” There are laudable recommendations in the proposal, such as the push for high quality preschool for four-year-olds living in poverty and the special consideration given to transportation. I am also impressed with the ability to calculate the base cost of a funding formula.

Having said all that, the Board of Education and Superintendent of Dayton City schools have serious reservations about the funding proposal as currently constructed. Dayton and other high poverty urban districts will fare better under Governor DeWine’s plan or even under the current funding model.

In comparison, Governor DeWine’s plan would give Dayton an additional \$3 million in 2020 and \$3.6 million in 2021, rather than no additional funding in those years under the Cupp/Patterson plan.

Our biggest concern is that the proposal leaves Dayton flat funded and without any additional resources to meet the very real challenges facing our district and students. As many of you know, Dayton is the only district facing potential state takeover this fall. Our students, like many other students in the state, desperately need additional resources that this flat funding would deny them. Even Governor DeWine recognized this when he said last month that “we know that poor kids take more money.”

In Dayton we are fortunate to have a strong Superintendent in Dr Elizabeth Lolli with a supportive board behind her. Under her direction, we have rebuilt a damaged relationship with the DEA and have unfrozen teacher pay scales, re-opened media centers in elementary schools, and hired more ELL staff and school counselors. We have much left to do, however. Additional financial resources would allow us to open more neighborhood community schools (we already have 6) with wrap-around services and community partners, and strengthen our existing specialty schools such as our Montessori elementary school and our STEM, arts magnet, and career tech high schools. It would also allow us to continue serving our higher than average percentage of students with disabilities, make our teacher salaries competitive with comparable districts, and continue high-quality professional development for our staff.

Dayton is not unique in the challenges it faces with Cupp/Patterson. Many other urban districts, such as Toledo, Cleveland, Lima, and Youngstown face the same dilemmas and see no increase in funding under this model while wealthier districts such as New Albany, Hilliard, and Olentangy end up with an additional \$4 million, \$7.8 million, and \$19 million in funding, respectively.

The funding disparity between those three districts and districts such as Dayton are of great concern; we cannot ignore that our districts are segregated by race, class, and socioeconomics and *that* segregation leads to massive disparities in educational outcomes. A Stanford study found that sixth graders in the wealthiest districts are four grade levels ahead of their poorest peers. Dayton itself has the 5th and 7th most segregated bordering school districts in the nation. With that knowledge, understanding that under the Cupp/Patterson funding model Dayton and other poor and urban districts lose out on additional and much needed funding, it's clear that while in many ways it's a step in the right direction, too many disadvantaged districts will be hit with even greater disparities.

We are also concerned about the lack of a transparent funding model. We urge the committee to release the formula so that Dayton and other districts can have a fuller understanding of it. We also request that the formula include census data to calculate poverty as well as the concentration of poverty as a factor in the formula. Without transparency, districts are unable to see real comparisons between the current funding model, the Cupp/Patterson plan, and Governor DeWine's proposal. I recognize the complexity of funding proposals and commend the committee for tackling such a monumental endeavor, but no real comparison between funding models can be made without a clear understanding of the model itself.

I strongly urge the subcommittee to understand that while the Cupp/Patterson plan makes improvements to funding Ohio's schools, it flat-funds Dayton and other poor urban school districts. Any plan that aims to strengthen our educational system and truly meet the needs of all children in the state ought to tread carefully when it comes to how it serves poor urban districts, and the numbers are clear that the Cupp/Patterson plan does not do enough to serve disadvantaged students across Ohio.

Thank you again for your time, and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.