

Testimony

April 11, 2019

Good morning. My name is Emily Hatfield. I represent Olentangy Local School District as the district's Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer. I am here to speak on behalf of our Board of Education, Administrators, and equally important, our fellow residents and taxpayers. Olentangy is a locally funded district. We are heavily reliant on local tax dollars to support our operations as *just* 6% of our overall general fund budget comes from the State to support the education of our students. For this reason, we have continued to lobby for fair funding over the past several years.

We understand that our community per-pupil wealth is higher than some. We are not suggesting that we should receive the full \$6,020/pupil the current funding formula suggests nor take dollars from other districts in the state. However, we are strong proponents of a fair funding formula that equitably supports each deserving student in the state of Ohio.

Olentangy is a unique school district. We have continuously grown from an average daily enrollment of 10,700 in 2006 to 20,209 students in 2018. That equates to an increase of 9,509 students, nearly double our entire enrollment, in just over a decade. During that same time, our state funding has DECREASED \$30.53 per pupil while the state average state funding has INCREASED \$747.32 per pupil. Our growth has continued into the current fiscal year. The district's ADM has increased another 400 students in this fiscal year alone to reach 20,609. The State funding received by our district does not adequately fund our student growth year over year.

The current funding formula does not effectively work for the majority of districts in the State. Wealth calculations, expressed as State Share Indexes, pits one district against another through artificial guarantees and caps placed on funding. As an example, Olentangy currently has a State Share Index of 34.5 and receives approximately \$600 per pupil in Total Formula Funding. A similar wealth district with a State Share Index of 33.4, less than one point difference, receives approximately \$2,523 per pupil in Total Formula Funding. Why is there a disparity of \$1,923/pupil when the State Share Indexes are so close? In a word – CAPS. Olentangy does not receive fair funding amounts per pupil due to the CAPS in current funding formula. The district in the example I share receives 4 times the funding per pupil that Olentangy does with approximately one-eighth the student population. The current formula does not work to support each student in the state fairly. (Statistics: School Funding Payment Report or SFPR March Payment #2 2019.)

Many news reports have stated that Olentangy would receive more than a 200% increase with the Fair School Funding Plan. This may be an accurate calculation; but doesn't tell the rest of the story. Our District has not received funding to keep pace with its student growth over the last decade. The Fair School Funding Plan provides for a base funding calculation that supports smaller districts through staffing minimums, it includes a transparent calculation to establish local capacity to participate in district funding, it provides funding directly to where students are educated, it maintains local control of expenditures, and it includes a phased-out approach of artificial guarantees and caps, ultimately helping Olentangy students and all students. This funding approach has the ability to facilitate fair funding for all students in our state.

Thank you for your time today.