

Testimony – House Bill 64
House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education

March 5, 2015

Chairman Cupp, Vice Chairman Derickson, Ranking Member Phillips and members of the Committee. My name is Thomas Tucker. I am superintendent of the Worthington School District here in Franklin County, and appreciate this opportunity to speak on behalf of the district, its board of education, its nearly 10,000 students and the community of Worthington.

School funding is among the more complex issues with which the General Assembly must deal. It is also one of the most important and most visible because of the manner in which it impacts students, families and communities throughout the state. And, because the school funding formula applies to 613 school districts, no two of which are alike, it inevitably will be unfair to some.

My request today is simple. Two years ago, the General Assembly reviewed the Administration's funding proposal, performed wholesale rewrites in the House; further adjusted it in the Senate, and created a formula that incorporated some elements of the Administration's proposal, but retained many concepts from previous funding plans.

H. B. 64 again contains new thinking from the Administration, but unnecessarily, perhaps inadvertently, reduces funding for some of the State's neediest districts. The current formula, fully funded, would correct many of those inequities.

Also, while Ohio's school districts are asked to assume a significant portion of the financing load at the local level, being able to rely on a stable, consistent, and, at least, modestly growing state share amount provides the reliability needed to effectively plan and execute an effective district budgeting and expenditure program. Five-year forecasts, required under state law, should be meaningful and accurate, based upon a realistic projection of revenues and expenses. Staffing, building maintenance, construction plans, technology upgrades, permanent improvements, and supplies of a multitude of descriptions must be carefully planned with a reasonable expectation that there will be sufficient funds to underwrite them. Levy cycles need to be anticipated with accuracy.

A stable, permanent formula for providing the right amounts of state aid to meet varying needs is essential if districts are to operate with the efficiencies that you, as legislators, have a right to expect.

We urge you to adopt the current formula as the foundation for your deliberations and fully fund it to meet the needs of Ohio's 1.7 million public school students.