

Testimony in Opposition of The Ohio Biennial Budget

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Jones
63 York Dr.
Hudson, OH 44236

March 18, 2015

Good Afternoon,

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Phillips and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education:

I am Laura Jones, a working mother of two daughters, Sydney, a sixth grader who acts in plays, and Eve, a fourth grader who loves riding her scooter in our cul-de-sac with her friends.

They both attend schools in the Hudson City School District.

I am here because of them - to testify today in opposition to the proposed Biennial Budget, specifically the cuts in State Funding to Hudson City Schools and to almost half of all other school districts in Ohio.

I spend a great deal of time volunteering for my children's schools because I value their education. I am a member of the district financial advisory committee, the co-chair of the district volunteer parent program, and an active member of our local PTO.

Through PTO, I am in charge of the Box Tops collection. This means I spend hours cutting out these little slips of paper that earn ten cent rebates from General Mills.

The school principal is so eager for more funds that he promotes this by doing crazy things like getting duct taped to the wall to help earn about \$3000 a year.

Two weekends ago, I was co-chair of our local PTO Pancake Breakfast. I spent months organizing a day where we could flip pancakes for \$8.00 a person to raise \$21,000 for the schools.

If you think the \$2.98 million in cuts you are making don't matter to me, you are wrong. I collect every dime possible to improve my children's schools. I am deeply concerned about Governor Kasich's proposed budget, and how it would hurt our District's 4,617 students and community.

Under the proposal, Hudson stands to lose \$2.98 million over the next two years – or 28% of the District’s income from state funding. I don’t know about you, but almost \$3 million dollars is a lot of money to me.

Hudson residents value education and historically support their district, working hard to make it one of best in the state. That tradition of excellence is supported by significant local taxes, funding 70% of the budget.

The new proposed budget is equivalent to a reduction of 3.3 mills to Hudson City Schools. This is 70% of the last levy millage passed in 2012, which followed two failed attempts. I worked on these levies and know how hard it is to pass a levy.

The new message from Columbus is that Hudson is on its own financially to educate its children. The Hudson School District is one of the highest performing districts in this state. Governor Kasich talks about keeping our own in Ohio to be leaders, entrepreneurs, business owners, doctors, lawyers, teachers...well, that is my dream for my girls, too. My children count, too.

Already, our children receive far less than the state’s average per pupil funding, far less dollars for special needs students, and far less dollars for facilities. Enough is enough. I am not asking for more, but I am demanding that we don’t receive any less.

Hudson’s TTP dwindled to \$1.8 million in 2013 and will be ZERO in 2017 under the Governor’s proposed budget—so much for the State’s guarantee.

Hudson currently receives only \$2,243 per student...far below the proposed formula of \$5,800 per student. With the new budget, Hudson will receive \$1,991 per student, a reduction of \$1.2 million. Under the proposed State budget, Hudson’s State funding will be half of what it was in 2007.

This budget proposal leaves our district no choice except to pass a large levy, or make significant cuts to programs for my two daughters and other Hudson children.

I understand that there are many districts in Ohio that are struggling. I supervise student teachers for two colleges at a variety of schools and I see the differences between them.

The \$700 million increase in the education budget is enough to help struggling schools without taking dollars from high performing districts, like Hudson.

The Governor's new budget clearly shifts previously earmarked school dollars to other funds used to attract businesses. High performing school districts help attract businesses, too.

I know you support school choice. I have made a choice to send my children to one of the top public schools in Ohio. I am asking you today to support my choice, too. Are you willing to cut funds to your own children's public schools?

Cutting funding to any of Ohio schools will lead us down a path to mediocrity in education, not down a path to excellence. Again, to quote the Governor, "The fact is, punishing success will drive people out."

As the mother of these two girls, I ask that you keep education strong in Ohio by voting "NO" to any proposal that reduces state funding for Hudson and any other Ohio public school district. Thank you.

Do you have any questions for me?