



## ZANE TRACE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Good morning, Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Phillips and members of the Finance Subcommittee. I am Jerry Mowery, Superintendent of Zane Trace Local School District and it is truly an honor to be here today and have the opportunity to represent Zane Trace Local School District and many similar school districts in our region. Thank you for giving school leaders a process for which we can share our stories about our respective school districts pertaining to funding and the proposed Governor's biennium budget on education. When analyzing the components of Ohio's school funding formula and evaluating the overall diversity of Ohio, I understand how difficult it must be to develop a funding system that meets the needs of all districts. Zane Trace is a rural district covering 104 square miles located in northern Ross County, best known for its outdoor drama production, Tecumseh! We are predominately an agriculture community with small businesses located throughout several towns. Our school has struggled to remain financially solvent over the past 5 years with the lack of revenue, numerous unfunded initiatives, and increasing cost of services. We accept and agree with accountability as long as it's consistent across the board. The Governor's proposed funding formula uses wealth and capacity measures. The current agricultural use value (CAUV) three year average approach does not provide a true reflection of property wealth and is more of a disadvantage to rural districts, resulting in less state aid. Also, a district's capacity is measured in per pupil increments. When dividing a district's capacity by the number of pupils, it misrepresents smaller districts. There seems to be some disproportions pertaining to these measures. We ask that those measures be re-evaluated.

Over the past 5 years our school district has lost over \$2 million in revenue from federal and state funding. We have no other way of generating revenue other than asking our voters for help which we have and they were not in support of passing an Earned Income Levy last Fall. Our district is predominately an agriculture area and it has been a difficult task to convince our local farmers that we need their help, when their taxes have doubled. The board of education has made \$3 million of budget reductions by eliminating staff, classes, programs, extra-curriculars, and transportation over the last 8 years. With approval of the FY16-17 biennium budget Zane Trace stands to lose an additional 3.5%. That total loss of revenue and budget reductions equate to over a third of our operating budget. Even though we have had to cut intervention positions,

our district continues to achieve good report card results. This is a compliment to our teaching staff that has gone without a salary increase in 7 years, whose medical benefits are increasing, and work load expanding, but they believe that education is one of the most important professions. Several clubs and activities that have been eliminated have continued for our students because staff is performing those duties on a volunteer basis allowing the students to continue to participate.

Our district also lacks the required technology to perform the PARCC assessments; therefore we were one of the few districts still using the hard copy versions. Zane Trace's mission statement that was created a few years ago was to develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, and to have them college and career ready. It is unfortunate but we will have a difficult time accommodating our students with such an opportunity.

Transportation concerns our district leaders as well. Since the elimination of the transportation allocation in 2009, Zane Trace has not purchased any new buses. The district went to double routing three years ago due to its aging fleet and in attempt to reduce cost. This was done to much dismay of our community. We ask the leaders of the Finance Subcommittee to consider reinstating the transportation allocation outside the formula and new buses to be fully funded.

In closing, we are struck by how much is changing in education as a result of society change. Parenting has changed, the work force has changed. Children are getting "older" younger. The competitiveness is greater. Kids are feeling pressure more but kids are smarter too! And within all of this, educators are working hard to ensure our students are best prepared for the future. As an advocate for public education, we need your help! Once again, I appreciate this opportunity to share Zane Trace's story, and thank the panel for sharing similar stories.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of the necessary changes to the proposed budget that will provide a thorough and efficient education to all children in the state of Ohio.

Sincerely,



Jerry Mowery  
Superintendent