

Ohio Senate
Finance Sub-Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 64
Opposition Testimony to House Bill 64

March 16, 2015

Mr. Chairman

My name is Mark Hensley from Westerville, Ohio. My daughter and I reside in District 3 represented by Senator Kevin Bacon. I am the parent of a 9th grade child in Columbus Public Schools. I come to you as an advocate for her and her classmates who could not be here today.

It is indeed an honor to stand before this body to give what I believe is a testimony that warrants your best consideration. I would be remiss not to thank this committee and your capable staff for the very long days and nights yielding fine work for our children and teachers throughout the budget process; but it is not good enough. For the record, let me state clearly, I am for everyone here. My presumption is that you are men and women of goodwill. It is for this sole reason I am seeking your understanding and support to my opposition to this poorly funded bill. We must better fund education in grades K-12 well beyond the rate of inflation. Introspection informs us we are responsible for the well being of our young. Which one of you are a parent or a grandparent or soon to be one? Would you feel confident for your kith and kin to be in this arctic environment enduring withering cuts to public education or the siphoning of public education dollars to community schools? What can we say about the imposed

battery of tests no one could prepare for; teachers had precious little classroom time if any to include lessons within their curriculum to build competence among the ranks. This short notice is a harsh reality, yet when it comes to the results, there is so much riding on the future. I am here today because it appears the mechanics in putting our collective money where our mouth is below the rate of inflation. Who wants a bare bones public education that this Bill proposes? This is unacceptable. I am opposed to House Bill 64 because it does not commit enough taxpayer dollars for the next two years and the overall funding level is half. It doesn't appear the Governor has done much better in his proposal. I am not seeing anything that speaks to such clarity. I would rather see a Bill that funds public education at levels appropriate to this fiscal year, specifically in technology, gifted education and classroom equipment. And I would argue we must afford it and we can afford it. We must fund well beyond the rate of inflation because we cannot afford not to. What we demand is the adherence to the ink and quill of the fourteenth amendment that insures due process and the equal protection clause that refers to public education. House Bill 64 as it is funded is beneath the fourteenth amendment.

Sitting here, I can only imagine you have heard your share of arguments. It is one thing to argue the will of the people, but what about the spirit of the law? What about the legitimate aims of the DeRolph decision, it remains what all of you have sworn to uphold. How does under-funding grades K-12 honor the spirit of the law and uphold the edicts of the fourteenth amendment that has stood the test of time in the United States Constitution? We all know the funding mechanism remains an issue. We cannot, we

must not sit idly by and further risk a stale delivery of goods and services to our children and teachers. In concert with you we must be a part of unleashing the kinetic energy that leads to a robust momentum to achieve at a high level in public education.

With a sense of urgency this body must act now. The time is now, because families are in a deficit with stagnant wages. Now, because in order to prepare for a battery of 13-17 tests costing additional time and money to meet this challenge we need better funding to prepare. Now, because tests have been administered and the wheels are in motion that will impact our children to either pass or fail, attempting to go to the next grade.

Moving forward, what would this haphazard process do for student and teachers confidence? We are reminded these state dollars are not a result of ill gotten gain...it is our money. How unfortunate we are to identify Gifted and Talented Children throughout the State of Ohio but not have the means or mechanism of action to execute what we all believe is a well deserved service to bright minds of children. The State of Ohio is not broke.

House Bill 64 doesn't add up to excelling beyond the competition rather it is a sad commentary with a small dollar amount with a mandate to do nothing more. For you see ultimately Ohio Public Schools must match the Republic of China's resolve where students have the highest test scores in the world in math and science despite the geopolitical tension between the mainland and Taiwan. Increased funding better enables Ohio's teachers to go toe to toe with Finland's world class teachers and training that already drives a superb Nordic system of education. Even Singapore's world class

approach to education is something Ohio's funding must comprehend or else we will be viewing from behind a spec in the distance far out in front.

I am expecting Senator Kevin Bacon's support and your support to commit additional funds to let China's Zhang Wei know in his native tongue he is no better in science than our Stein. Taiwan's Chen Wang must know when he looks on the map that Ohio's Ferguson is a force to be reckoned with in reading, writing and arithmetic. Finland's West, Beyer and Roy must know beyond a shadow of a doubt the State of Ohio's William, Wilson, Mitchell and Taylor are fundamentally equipped to pursue the law and arts. Right now the funding commitment for public education is barely a whisper. It is disappointingly inadequate leading to stress, mediocre results and failure. Surely this body does not intend to communicate mediocrity and half hearted funding for public education?! This House Bill cannot be true? It doesn't match the words with verbs and relevant numbers.

It is tantamount that we make every effort today to change the downward spiral to public education funding and not let another precious moment slip by our collective conscience. When it comes to earning a fundamental education, that doesn't mean a minimal education, a skeletal education, barely an education. A fundamental education is cadre to a holistic educational platform to compete at the next level and most likely win. This Bill as it is funded does not accomplish that. Time waits for no one. We live in a day and time where all of us are competing within the framework of nanoseconds

instead of minutes. We no longer boil water, we microwave it. We don't hit the tab of an Olivia typewriter we are hitting the enter button as defined by Apple, Samsung and Dell. We don't need a quarter to call from a phone booth, we buy time and data. We cannot wait. We can no longer afford to do so. Mr. Chairman I encourage this committee's finger to hit the enter button for more funding. As a parent I am opposed to this Bill because it represents a paltry sum. While my opposition may seem peculiar it is only because the status quo of underfunding public education must stop. If I agree to this Bill as it stands, I would then agree to the level of funding that continues to decline. I wholeheartedly disagree. We can do better than this. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff to further discuss on how to alleviate this hardship on parents and children. I want answers.