

Brooklyn Board of Education

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Transcript of Testimony of Mark Gleichauf, Superintendent To the Ohio House of Representatives Primary and Secondary Finance Subcommittee

March 22, 2017

Good afternoon Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller and the other members of the House of Representative Finance Subcommittee for Primary and Secondary Education. My name is Dr. Mark Gleichauf and I am superintendent of the Brooklyn City Schools in Cuyahoga County. On behalf of Brooklyn's 1400 students and its supportive taxpayers, I want to share some concerns regarding House Bill 49, highlight some inequities for severely capped school districts like Brooklyn, and propose some changes that could remedy these inequities.

Brooklyn is a first ring suburb of Cleveland and I have shared some basic information about the district in one of my handouts. You will notice it has homes of modest means, but these are the homes of hard-working people who have supported their schools as we currently have 54 voted mills on our taxes.

My first point this morning is regarding initial proposals for the next biennium budget for the state related to House Bill 49. Brooklyn City Schools has several funding challenges but two particular issues, the Tangible Personal Property phase out and our state funding capped district status, which have crippled Brooklyn City Schools. In the initial models from the state, Brooklyn City Schools funding will decrease in state funding by nearly 27% in FY2018 when including losses of the Tangible Personal Property tax reimbursement. This places Brooklyn City Schools number 14 of the highest percentage loss in final core aid plus tangible property tax loss reimbursement of the approximately 611 school districts in the state of Ohio. This is according to the Legislative Service Commission data as compiled in a spreadsheet by Dr. Howard Fleeter.

Regarding TPP, Brooklyn has an approximately \$16 million dollar budget and TPP phase out over the last several years have reduced our revenues by \$1.3 million in the last 7 years and will reduce it by another \$1 million in the next 4 years. As you can imagine, that total of \$2.3 million dollars is astronomical in a \$16 million dollar budget. These TPP reductions is just one of the reasons why Brooklyn has been forced to make numerous cuts to staff and programming that directly impact the district's efforts to provide a quality education to our students.

But it doesn't end there for Brooklyn's funding challenges as it has been a capped district per the state funding formula. A capped district is a district that falls within the funding formula so

that the district only receives a percentage more increase in state funding over the previous year. The affect can be dramatic. Brooklyn City Schools funding formula before the cap is applied indicates Brooklyn should receive \$3,433,171 in State Funding. After the cap is applied the district will only receive \$920,333. In fact, our cap is so severe that we receive LESS funding than the non-public schools in the state. We are actually one of 27 districts that are capped below the amount that is given to non-public schools. For example, the Brooklyn City Schools in FY 16 received \$650 per student from the state while St. Thomas More, a Catholic School in Brooklyn, received \$1209 per student.

Being capped in per pupil aid below non-public schools is inequitable, but when you add the preponderance of school voucher programs or proposed opportunity scholarships, it turns to unfair. I don't think any of us would avoid good healthy competition, but we would want an even playing field for that competition. Only receiving half of what non-publics schools receive in per pupil aid is not an even playing field regardless.

Among the 27 school districts that receive less than the non-public schools, Brooklyn's need and situation certainly stands out. I have shared a spreadsheet in my submitted testimony today. Of the 27 capped districts that receive less per pupil funding than the non-public schools...

- Brooklyn has the LOWEST median income, which is \$29,416
- Brooklyn has the LOWEST average income, which is \$39,855
- Brooklyn has the SECOND HIGHEST economically disadvantaged student or poverty rate, which is 51%
- Brooklyn has the HIGHEST "Local Effort Index" per the FY15 Cupp Report, which is 1.19

This indicates Brooklyn residents have modest means, but support their schools greater than most of the state. That is why I ask for your support today.

I do not come to you without a solution, though. Brooklyn's State Representative Martin J. Sweeney will propose two potential amendments to the state budget which will create better equity of how these state funds are better dispersed to districts in great need like Brooklyn. I ask for your recognition and support of one of these amendments in your upcoming deliberation on the state budget and the state funding formula. These amendments rely on better metrics, like median income, to determine cap status but allow flexibility while helping solve the inadequacy for higher poverty districts.

Thank you for time and service to the State of Ohio. Your efforts in these complex but important issues are not lost on people like me who are the loyal voters of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions.