

Thank you for the distinct privilege to provide testimony this morning regarding House Bill 305, known as Create New School Financing System, presented by primary sponsors Representatives Cupp and Patterson. I am Mark Hughes, a member of the Washington Local School Board of Education in Toledo (Lucas County). My Representative in District 45 is Ms. Lisa Sobecki. I consider her to be a friend and outstanding servant to her constituents as well as the public education sector, who also is a co-sponsor of the bill.

As we are all aware of the DeRolph decision by the Ohio Supreme Court more than 20 years ago; that ruled the funding structure of public education based on property taxes was unconstitutional. Additionally, we also know the Court has come to the same unconstitutional finding a total four times since the initial landmark case. Let us not fail to forget The Court tasked the legislature to devise an equitable system of funding. To date, that has not transpired. House Bill 305 could be the step in the right direction to finally remedy this lopsided funding structure that has handicapped taxpayers, school systems, and most importantly...students.

I stand in front of you today as a representative of Washington Local Schools. We have been a capped school district since 2014 losing more that \$14 million each year and shortchanging approximately 2000 of our students...the equivalent enrollment

of our only high school...Whitmer High School. Adding that up, we have lost nearly \$100 million by being a capped district utilizing an unconstitutional formula that places additional burden on our local taxpayers...and our school board to make critical decisions impacting student's education by doing our very best as stewards of taxpayer money to balance the budget.

Furthermore, the "push" for the expansion of EdChoice and charter schools adds insurmountable strain to our already fragile funding structure in Washington Local. We know already that our performance rating outperforms most of these schools in our local area. Not to mention, our accountability threshold is much higher than our counterparts.

The State of Ohio has ignored the Ohio Supreme Court and practices residual budgeting, which the Supreme Court has prohibited. The residual budgeting occurred many years before the current financial crisis when the State was running budget surpluses and having a record rainy day fund.

We expend over \$5.5 million on students who do not attend our district which exceeds 6 % of our budget. Last year our district had over 120 students attend a private school on an EdChoice voucher. However, over 100 of these students never

attended Washington Local Schools. Again, here is an expenditure that we are required to make, but no State revenue to fund it, only local property tax dollar payments.

Our Washington Local residents did not vote to have their local property tax dollars assist in funding a private education. As we passed our last levy to promote new construction of Washington Local School buildings and operating expenses, our residents casted votes for those measures, not to pay for private school tuition of students who never once attended any of our district schools.

I come here today not to take away a parent's opportunity to choice where they decide to educate their child...but an ask that House Bill 305 proceeds to create a level playing field on school funding that is constitutional and affords all students in the State of Ohio a fair chance to receive a quality education. Allow us to compete and demonstrate the quality of education that can be offered to our children of Washington Local Schools. That is simply what I come here to ask.

We have seen the work the past three years in a bi-partisan, focused effort of Superintendents and Treasurers from all over Ohio that have given their time to embrace a new funding structure. Make history as the legislatures who for the first time

in Ohio, ensuring every child—public, private or charter would have the resources they need to reach their full potential. This formula in this House Bill doesn't steal from one child to benefit another but instead gives a fair chance to all kids—regardless of zip code— you as legislators have one chance, in the middle of the worst pandemic in a century to make your mark. You have a chance to choose Ohio's children. Can you be the light at the end of this dark tunnel for Ohio's children or will you fail then yet again. No one will bring you a more comprehensive plan. If not now, when? I plead with you to make landmark decision for the betterment of Ohio's education for our youth.