



**The Ohio 8 Coalition**

**Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 305**

**House Finance Committee**

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**December 2, 2020**

Co-Chairmen Oelslager and Callendar, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee. On behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition, we appreciate the opportunity to share our written testimony on the proposed school funding system. The Ohio 8 Coalition is comprised of Ohio's eight urban school district Superintendents and eight Teacher Union Presidents and we serve nearly 200,000 students across Ohio. In that vein, we provide this testimony on behalf of The Ohio 8 Coalition as an Interested Party regarding House Bill 305.

First, we want to thank Representatives Cupp and Patterson and the Fair School Funding Committee for taking on the important task of crafting a very thoughtful and strategic plan for Ohio. We have been in regular contact with them to help provide insight from our leadership team as to how to refine the funding approach so that it more adequately addresses the needs of larger school districts with deep poverty and large diverse populations with significant needs while at the same time not compromising what is also best for school districts that are different from ours. We are grateful for this ongoing level of partnership, transparency, and trust to ensure we craft what is best for all students in Ohio. We offer the following insight regarding SB 376.

**The Positives**

1. Provides much needed budgeting stability for school districts
2. The net increase in funding to districts initially and seemingly over time based on a long-term funding framework is welcome news and one that can set a standard for future State Operating Budget deliberations.
3. The framework reduces an over reliance on property taxes by providing additional state funds and potentially reducing the need for tax levies.
4. Prioritizes and begins to fund costs related to educating economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
5. Direct funding for charter schools including per pupil and transportation costs.

6. Combining all school voucher and scholarship programs with the State of Ohio funding those programs directly.

### **Challenges & Requests for Clarity**

1. It is not clear if the direct funding to charter schools is from a line item separate from funds dedicated to traditional public schools. Direct funding is key but only if the source of those funds are separate and are not siphoned away from traditional public school funding streams.
2. It is unclear if Governor DeWine Wellness Funds are assumed in this formula and this may have an impact on a school district's 5-year projections.
3. Long phase-in period will not allow school districts to assume these funds within their 5-year projections.
4. Long phase in period limits available funds for the needs of existing K-12 students, especially as we respond to the global coronavirus pandemic.
5. There is no mechanism outlined in the legislation to adjust for inflation or to determine future costs attached to the studies that still need to be conducted related to economically disadvantaged, etc.
6. Districts have short term funding numbers, but no formulaic calculations to build their required 5-year projections.
7. While using average salaries for the various positions anticipated in the base cost portion of the formula is a good start, the formula does not consider differences in regional economies across Ohio, which can be significant.

Ohio is at an important decision point. The fix to Ohio's education funding challenge requires both the political will and the resources needed to make it happen. We are at a point in our state's history where there is the political will and the social desire to prioritize education funding and to finally make a change in the way we support our children. Even with the challenges we've outlined, the Ohio 8 Coalition believes that now is the time to finally resolve a constitutional challenge of Ohio's funding system that has plagued us for nearly 30 years. Please know that we stand ready to make this a reality for students now and for generations to come. We are so close. We must make this happen now and cannot let this once in a generation opportunity slip away. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today and thank you for your efforts to date and those you will continue to make to significantly improve Ohio's school funding formula.

*[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to help shape state education policy.*