



November 18, 2020

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Cera, and esteemed members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for allowing us to testify on behalf of the Ohio STEM Learning Network (OSLN) and Battelle to address our concerns surrounding the Fair School Funding Plan, Substitute House Bill 305. The Ohio STEM Learning Network was launched in 2008 to support the growth and quality of STEM education throughout the state. OSLN delivers innovative educational programs and connects administrators to high-quality educational resources as a public-private partnership between Battelle and the State of Ohio. The network also manages the Ohio STEM school designation process in tandem with the Ohio Department of Education and the state STEM Committee.

The network counts 79 STEM designated schools as partners. These schools span the state and include Metro Early College Middle School and High School, championed by Battelle and The Ohio State University.

While we are in favor of most elements of the bill and applaud the sponsors, House and Senate, for many months of hard work to bring this legislation to fruition, we must underline our serious concerns over the manner in which non-traditional schools receive funding. Under Sub. HB 305 (and consequentially the senate version, SB 376) independent, public STEM schools face a major reduction in funding.

Ohio's public, independent STEM schools include Metro Early College Middle School and High School, the Dayton Regional STEM School, Bio-Med Science Academy, and the Global Impact STEM Academy. Under the current bill, these schools fall into the same funding category as community/non-traditional schools, as under current law. There are currently seven independent STEM schools, serving 3,300 students across Ohio.

This iteration of the Fair School Funding Plan would fund three components of the base formula – Instructional and Student Supports (minus athletic co-curricular), Building Leadership and Operations, and District Leadership and Accountability Data – at 90 percent for non-traditional schools. With this approximate ten percent cut, students at independent STEM schools will receive \$2.04 million less in funding each year, simply because they chose not to attend a traditional public school.

In addition to the 90 percent issue, we also remain concerned that the current legislation provides funding for non-traditional schools in the form of a separate line item. This earmark consistently puts STEM school students' funding in jeopardy given the administration's or legislature's prioritization of funding schools of choice. Independent STEM schools rely on this funding to provide exceptional education to thousands of students each year and we strongly urge you to protect this funding against the potential for line-item veto.

The Ohio STEM Learning Network would not be able to carry out its mission of educating and encouraging students within the science, technology, engineering and mathematics career fields without the partnership of the State of Ohio and the Ohio General Assembly. We recognize the hard work that went into the creation of this formula and stand ready to assist or provide further information, along with our other partners. As the new formula seeks to address equity concerns in education across the state, we urge you to ensure that independent STEM school students receive the same funding amount and assurance of future funding as students in traditional schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are happy to answer any questions, as needed.



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