



FINANCE COMMITTEE  
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 305  
TESTIMONY OF CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 1, 2020

Co-chairmen Oelslager and Calendar, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Substitute House Bill 305, the Fair School Funding Plan. My name is Jennifer Wagner and I am the Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer for Cincinnati Public Schools.

As you may know, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) is the 3rd largest public school district in Ohio. Cincinnati Public Schools serves an enrollment of approximately 36,000 students in more than 60 pre-K to 12th grade schools, representing more than 35,000 students and their families in the City of Cincinnati.

Let me begin by thanking Speaker Cupp and Representative Patterson for their leadership and foresight in putting this proposal forward. As well, I would like to thank each of you for considering it and for conducting open hearings where you listen to public input. This bipartisan and thoughtful approach sets the proper tone for meaningful improvements in the school funding formula for Ohio's public schools.

CPS supports the Fair School Funding Plan because it clearly outlines an approach for funding the cost of educating Ohio's children. The cost of educating Ohio's students is shared between the State and local communities, but it is difficult to explain and causes confusion. Districts, like CPS, have had to resort to numerous levies three of which occur on regular intervals as renewals. Renewal levies are confusing to our voters. This makes financial planning difficult and it erodes the public trust in Ohio's public school funding model.

Please note my appreciation for the transparency and clarity in H.B. 305 and the recommendations of the Working Group. The determination of base cost which includes consideration of each district's financial, economic circumstances is fair and will lead to consistent, quality educational opportunities for all of Ohio's students. Further, H.B. 305 provides for the ability to seek additional funding. It provides a new category of state aid devoted to addressing the mental health and emotional needs of students. This is particularly important for CPS as we have a highly diverse student population comprising students who are poor, special needs, academically gifted, and non-English speakers. The challenges of many urban districts are accounted for in this legislation and its framework.

This formula begins to remove the inequities inherent by the old funding formula, where the same student bodies are state funded differently based on the relative property wealth of each district to the rest of the state. The Cupp-Patterson formula funds all students with similar needs at the same level. The formula, in its staffing calculations, also suggest best practices for supporting the instructional model for our students.



Additionally, this formula recognizes that school districts cannot transport non-public and community school students with as much efficiency as transporting the district enrolled students. The multiplier in the reimbursement for transportation helps reduce the financial burden on the resident district.

Lastly, we support the elimination of pass-through funding. We support student choice and welcome competition, however, the tuition deductions in the current funding plan create funding inequities for our students. The average deduction per student is greater than the average funding per CPS student. In effect, the state is funding community school and voucher students at a higher rate than the rate of reimbursement for students who choose to attend their public district schools. The Cupp-Patterson formula removes this funding inequity.

As the Treasurer of CPS, I urge support to adopt and fully fund this bill.

Thank you for considering my testimony of Substitute House Bill 305.

Jennifer Wagner