



Representative Bride Rose Sweeney

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 504
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
December 2, 2020

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 504. This legislation responds specifically to the unique circumstances of Brooklyn City Schools in my district.

Time and time again, the hardworking people of Brooklyn, Ohio have supported their public schools by levying taxes that now amount to 54 mills per \$100,000 of property value. More than 50 percent of the school district is economically disadvantaged, giving it one of the highest mill to income ratios in the state. However, Brooklyn City School District still receives less funding per pupil than chartered non-public schools. Despite an extremely high local effort index, Brooklyn's state aid per pupil sits around \$941 due to its status as a low-income district with a cap on state funding. After the millions lost from Governor Kasich's phase-out of the Tangible Personal Property Tax, this has gotten to the point that Brooklyn receives nearly a third less than the statewide average for private schools, \$1,371 per student, from auxiliary service and administrative cost reimbursement. Not long ago, Brooklyn received as little as half of what private schools receive – and the disparity could reach that level again.

We all recognize that there is a school funding issue in Ohio. According to LSC, 30 districts receive less from the state than chartered nonpublic schools do for auxiliary services and administrative cost reimbursement. As you may know, this has been a longstanding issue that the General Assembly has tried to remedy. Most recently, two budgets would have created parity so that no public school would receive less than the chartered non-publics. However, both Governor Kasich and Governor DeWine line-item vetoed the measure.

In his 2019 veto message, Governor DeWine said: "The districts that would benefit the most from this item are among the wealthiest in Ohio. Carving out a special exemption to provide additional resources to the districts most capable of providing resources for their students is not a responsible use of the limited funding available to Ohio's school districts." While the majority of those 30 districts are wealthy, Brooklyn is not. My legislation offers a baseline solution by providing parity with private schools for districts that fall below the statewide median income. In the most recent projections from LSC, three districts would meet this threshold to be given parity.

We are all hopeful for a new, fair school funding formula, and Cupp-Patterson – if enacted and funded – would help Brooklyn tremendously. However, it ought to be true in principle as well as in fact that the state does not send less aid to public schools whose communities are in poverty than it does to private schools. The goal of this legislation is to ensure future parity, and that is my reason for bringing it before you today.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.