

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1
Ohio House of Representatives Finance Subcommittee on
Primary and Secondary Education

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, I am Nicole Marshall, Chief Financial Officer for Westerville City Schools. With me is my colleague, Dr. John Kellogg, Superintendent for Westerville City Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony today in support of House Bill 1 - the proposed Fair School Funding Plan for Ohio's Schools. Signing on to our testimony today are 133 school district leaders representing 62 central Ohio school districts. They are listed at the end of this testimony.

Please allow me to share with you a brief summary of Westerville City Schools' financial history. Westerville City Schools educates approximately 15,000 students each year. That number has grown by over 1,300 since our district last opened new buildings in 2003 and we are projected to grow by another 1,300 students over the next 10 years. Thanks to the support of our community, we will be building two additional school buildings to help accommodate the growth we are seeing. The bond issue supported by our community was for \$103 million for the additional buildings and much needed facilities work. In

reaching out to the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, we learned that it would be at least another six or seven years before Westerville would even be considered for state funding for facilities, so our taxpayers stepped up, as they have had to do time and time again.

In addition to the bond issue, our voters also approved a 5.9 mill operating levy to support the continuing operations of the district. That levy is estimated to produce \$15.6 million in new revenue for the district annually.

It wasn't too long ago when Westerville had to make deep cuts due to the failure of a levy in order to keep a balanced budget. Cuts that no doubt caused a tremendous hardship to our community. I think people forget from time to time that public schools are some of the largest employers in communities across the state and each time we have to make cuts due to the lack of funding, the effects are felt far and wide.

I could talk about how Westerville is underfunded by about \$12 million annually due to the cap. I could talk about how we lose over \$8 million dollars a year to charter and private schools. I could talk about how that money going out is completely and totally funded by my local taxpayers given that we have never received the amount of funding that any formula has calculated for us. I could also talk

about how the state has never sent a penny of funding for approximately 3,000 of our 15,000 students. But you have already heard all that in some form or another, I'm sure.

What I do want to talk about is why I support the Fair School Funding Plan. My taxpayers are tired of our school funding system being broken. They deserve better. My students deserve better. School Treasurers and CFOs should not be the only people that understand how school funding is calculated.

The Fair School Funding Plan is a good starting point to what my students and taxpayers deserve. It was developed by a workgroup that included my colleagues for whom I have a great deal of respect. It is clear, transparent and thoughtful. It is driven by research and not politics.

All of those facts about the Fair School Funding Plan are important. But perhaps the most important aspect of the plan is this. It reduces the overreliance on local taxpayers to fund education, and it provides for a predictable formula that we can use to plan.

Strong public education is the foundation of our democracy. I encourage you to approve the Fair School Funding Plan to ease the burden the state has placed on

local taxpayers and begin leveling the playing field for students across Ohio. Thank you.

Transition to Dr. John Kellogg, Westerville Superintendent

Again, thank you for providing us this time. As I share my testimony in support of House Bill 1, the Fair School Funding Plan for Ohio's Schools, I want to say from the outset that I do so from a spirit of optimism. I say that knowing that there are many observing this process with a sense that this current heroic, three-year journey to get to a Fair School Funding Plan is going to suffer the fate of previous efforts.

I am choosing to remain optimistic.

For those who may wonder why I have not joined them in their pessimism, I say this. I believe the Fair School Funding Plan will gain traction because it has been developed in a manner that demonstrates a commitment to listening to the voice, because it reflects the ideas of those who are vested in the outcome, and quite honestly, because it just makes sense.

Now, as we consider the pros and cons of the current plan, I would suggest that we do so from the perspective of someone other than school superintendents, treasurers, boards of education, and legislatures. Instead, I would like us to consider the perspective of the Ohio taxpayer.

You see, I think it's important to remind each other that this isn't our money. It's taxpayer money that has been collected to provide a service that is so important, it's mandated by the Ohio Constitution. So, my comments on the Fair Funding Plan are framed from the context of how it addresses the expectations of taxpayers related to clarity, priorities, predictability, and needs.

My first point is this. One of the strengths of this plan is that it is clear about what is being funded. The details associated with defining the base cost are more evident than anything in Ohio's previous history. Taxpayers can clearly see what they are funding in their public schools. We can clearly say to our taxpayers, this is what you are paying for in our public schools.

Second, budgets are intended to align with priorities. What is determined to be critical is more likely to get funded. This funding plan provides a means of highlighting the state's priorities for its public schools. In times of financial challenges, we all have to make difficult decisions about

what to fund and at what level. This plan allows the state to clearly demonstrate to taxpayers what is being supported and what will have to be set aside until conditions improve. Budgets demonstrate priorities. We can say to our taxpayers, “Here are the goals for our public schools and this is the level of financial support we are providing to those goals.”

The third point is predictability. This has been a long standing frustration for schools and their communities for decades in Ohio. As policy makers change seats, so do the means of funding schools. As you know, treasurers and school boards are required to create five year financial forecasts. One of the greatest challenges they face when preparing this document is predicting *when* additional local funding may be needed for their schools. On top of that, determining exactly *how much* funding is needed is no more than a guessing game. The plan before you addresses these challenges by providing a more stable means of refining the predictable nature of school funding. We can say to our taxpayers, “Here is what we see as our financial resources for our future.”

The last point I will make relates to needs. Under our current situation, it is challenging to make associations between school performance and financial resources from the state. We engage in debates about whether or not

outcomes we get are influenced at all by the policy level decisions related to funding. In the proposed plan, we can literally connect those relationships which can help drive future policy decisions. The financial and performance data that will be available can be used to measure whether we are investing enough to get the outcomes we strive for, or if our practices are flawed. We can say to our taxpayers, “Here are the needs of Ohio’s students and here is how we are funding those needs.”

In Westerville, our leadership talks about honoring commitments. The taxpayers of Ohio provide us, superintendents, treasurers, elected boards of education, and legislatures, financial resources to operate a system of public schools. They have made a commitment. Our responsibility is to honor that commitment by providing taxpayers with a school funding plan that achieves the following: It clearly spells out what is funded; it demonstrates Ohio’s priorities for public schools, as well as how those priorities are being supported financially; It can be used to predict what the future funding needs will be; and it can demonstrate some understanding of whether current student needs are being funded equitably and adequately.

So, with the taxpayer in mind, I urge you to join me in supporting House Bill 1 - the Fair School Funding Plan.

Central Ohio Education Leaders who have signed on to this testimony:

Kirk Grandy, Treasurer, Berne Union Local Schools

Shawn Haughn, Superintendent, Bloom-Carroll Local Schools

James Sotlar, Superintendent, Canal Winchester Local Schools

Nick Roberts, Treasurer, Canal Winchester Local Schools

Brian Petrie, Superintendent, Cardington-Lincoln Local Schools

Jon Mason, Treasurer/CFO, Cardington-Lincoln Local Schools

Quinn Maceyko, Board of Education Member, Cardington-Lincoln Local Schools

Kris Weldy, Board of Education Member, Centerburg Local Schools

Lori Houck, Treasurer, Centerburg Local Schools

Mike Hebenthal, Superintendent, Centerburg Local Schools

Deborah Lawwell, Treasurer, Chillicothe City Schools

Deborah Swinehart, Superintendent, Chillicothe City Schools

Chris Wagner, Board Member, Circleville City Schools

Jonathan Davis, Superintendent, Circleville City Schools

Kristen Rhoads, Treasurer/CFO, Circleville City Schools

Patty Rothe, Vice-President of Board of Education, Circleville City Schools

Tonya Mickley, Treasurer/CFO, Danville Local School

Angie Macwhinney, Director of Special Education, Delaware City Schools

Heidi Kegley, Superintendent, Delaware City Schools

Jayna McDaniel-Browning, Board of Education, Delaware City Schools

Melissa Swearingen, Treasurer/CFO, Delaware City Schools

Brian Kern, Treasurer/CFO, Dublin City Schools

Todd Hoadley, Superintendent, Dublin City Schools

Kimberly Miller, Superintendent/CEO, Eastland-Fairfield Career and Technical Schools

David Varda, CFO/Treasurer, ESCCO

Aaron Johnson, Treasurer/CFO, Fairbanks Local Schools

Adham Schirg, Superintendent, Fairbanks Local Schools

Laura Cassell, Treasurer/CFO, Fairfield County ESC

Marie Ward, Superintendent, Fairfield County ESC

Chad Belville, Superintendent, Fairfield Union Local Schools

Heather Darnold, Treasurer, Fredericktown Local Schools

Beryl Brown Piccolantonio, Board President, Gahanna Jefferson City Schools

Jason Kee, Transportation Supervisor, Gahanna Jefferson City Schools

Michael Verlingo, Treasurer, Gahanna Jefferson City Schools

Stephen Barrett, Superintendent, Gahanna Jefferson City Schools

Brittany Treolo, Treasurer, Granville Exempted Village Schools

Jeff Brown, Superintendent, Granville Exempted Village Schools

Garilee Ogden, Superintendent, Groveport Madison Local Schools

Felicia Drummey, Treasurer, Groveport Madison Schools

Nathan Huffman, Superintendent, Highland Local - Morrow County

Jon Mason, Treasurer/CFO, Highland Local Schools

Brian Wilson, CFO, Hilliard City Schools

John Marschhausen, Superintendent/CEO, Hilliard City Schools

Mark Ingles, Treasurer, Jefferson Local Schools

Vicki Bechtel, School Board Member, Knox County ESC

Mark Gleichauf, Superintendent, Lakewood Local Schools

Julie Taylor, Treasurer, Lancaster City Schools

Steve Wigton, Superintendent, Lancaster City Schools

April Bolyard, Treasurer, Liberty Union-Thurston Local Schools

Michael Johnson, Superintendent, Liberty Union-Thurston Local Schools

Amy Ucan, Assistant Treasurer, Licking Heights Local Schools

Angel King, Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Anna Annett, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Licking Heights Local Schools

Becky Morrison, Treasurer's Assistant, Licking Heights Local Schools

Brian Bagley, Board Member, Licking Heights Local Schools

Christina Lyle, Administrative Assistant to the Treasurer, Licking Heights Local Schools

Corey Stroud, Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Darlene Mortine, Transportation Supervisor, Licking Heights Local Schools

David Moore, Assistant Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Ellie Geiger, Athletic Director, Licking Heights Local Schools

Kelly Moore, Transportation Secretary, Licking Heights Local Schools

Kerry Martinez, Assistant Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Kim Henderson, Director of HR and Student Discipline, Licking Heights Local Schools

Kimberly Bratz, Administrative Assistant to Human Resources, Licking Heights Local Schools

Kurt Scheiderer, Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Linda Aitken, Administrative Assistant, Licking Heights Local Schools

Mallory Sribanditmongkol, Communication Specialist, Licking Heights Local Schools

Mark Rader, VP of Board of Education, Licking Heights Local Schools

Michael Shipton, Assistant Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Michelle D'Amico, Assistant Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Mitch Tom, Supervisor of Pupil Services, Licking Heights Local Schools

Nicole Roth, Secretary for Special Education/Pupil Services, Licking Heights Local Schools

Philip Wagner, Superintendent, Licking Heights Local Schools

Rita Pendexter, Assistant Athletic Director, Licking Heights Local Schools

Sally Rudduck, District Registrar, Licking Heights Local Schools

Sandra Phillips, Principal, Licking Heights Local Schools

Sara Morman, Supervisor of Special Education, Licking Heights Local Schools

Tiffany Blumhorst, School board member, Licking Heights Local Schools

Todd Griffith, Treasurer/CFO, Licking Heights Local Schools

Tracy Russ, Board President, Licking Heights Local Schools

Tonya Boyd, Treasurer, Licking Valley Local Schools

Steve McAfee, Treasurer, Logan Elm Local Schools

Kristine Blind, CFO/Treasurer, London City Schools

Lou Kramer, Superintendent, London City Schools

Bradley Herman, Superintendent, Lucas Local Schools

Robin Klenk, Treasurer, Madison Local Schools (Richland County)

Matthew Ketcham, Treasurer, Madison-Champaign ESC

Todd Mustain, Treasurer/CFO, Madison-Plains Local Schools

Kelly Mackay, Board Member, Marion City Schools

Leslie Schneider, Board Member, Marion City Schools

Ron Larussi, Superintendent, Marion City Schools

Ted McKinniss, Board Member, Marion City Schools

Richard Smith, School Board Vice President, Marysville Exempted Village Schools

Todd Johnson, Treasurer, Marysville Exempted Village Schools

Danielle Prohaska, Superintendent, Mechanicsburg Exempted Village Schools

Margie Bennett, Board of Education President, Mount Vernon City Schools

William Seder Jr., Superintendent, Mount Vernon City Schools

Rebecca Jenkins, Treasurer/CFO, New Albany Plain Local Schools

Michael Sawyers, Superintendent, New Albany-Plain Local Schools

Julio Valladares, Treasurer/CFO, Newark City Schools

Timothy Carr, Board President, Newark City Schools

Kathryn Reedy, Educator, Northern Local Schools

Scott Schmidt, Superintendent, Northridge Local Schools (Licking County)

Emily Hatfield, Treasurer/CFO, Olentangy Local Schools

Lisa Carmichael, Superintendent, Ontario Local Schools

Randy Harvey, Treasurer, Ontario Local Schools

Dennis Franks, Superintendent, Pickaway-Ross County Joint Vocational Schools

Joshua Younge, Principal, Pickaway-Ross County Joint Vocational Schools

Todd Stahr, Treasurer/CFO, Pickaway-Ross County Joint Vocational Schools

Jolene Carter, Treasurer, Pleasant Local Schools

Gavyn Bazley, Treasurer, Plymouth-Shiloh Local Schools

Melvin Brown, Superintendent, Reynoldsburg City Schools

Neal Whitman, Board Vice President, Reynoldsburg City Schools

Tammy Miller, Treasurer, Reynoldsburg City Schools

Jason Fleming, Treasurer, Ridgedale Local Schools

Robert Britton, Superintendent, Ridgedale Local Schools

Adam Wickham, Superintendent, River Valley Local Schools

Dalton Summers, Superintendent, River View Local Schools

Richard Jones, Treasurer/CFO, Southwest Licking Local Schools

Bill Wise, Superintendent, South-Western City Schools

David Donofrio, Board of Education Member, South-Western City Schools

Cindy Alderman, Admissions Specialist, Tolles Career & Technical Center

Cu Brooks, Board Member, Tolles Career & Technical Center

Emmy Beeson, Superintendent, Tolles Career & Technical Center

Michael Oler, Supervisor of Academics, Tolles Career & Technical Center

Tamara Woods, Treasurer/CFO, Tolles Career & Technical Center

Tom Bichsel, Board member, Tolles Career & Technical Center

John Rose, Treasurer, Union-Scioto Local Schools

Paul Imhoff, Superintendent, Upper Arlington City Schools

William Kirby, Superintendent/CEO, Walnut Township Local Schools

Tom Bailey, Superintendent, Washington Court House City Schools

Brian Hamler, Superintendent, Whitehall City Schools

John Walsh, Treasurer, Whitehall City Schools