

**Testimony on HB110 (Appropriations for FY 2022-23 Budget) Submitted to the Ohio
Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee
May 13, 2021**

**by Megan Wheeler McLaughlin, University Heights, Ohio 44118
7th Grade Science Teacher at Roxboro Middle School
Resident and Community Member of University Heights**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

I am writing to urge you to pass, implement and fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan in HB110.

This plan is urgently needed in communities like Cleveland Heights-University Heights where I live, work as an educator in one of our middle schools, and where I will send my daughter to public school when she enters kindergarten in the fall of 2025.

You have probably heard of my District as it relates to EdChoice and school funding advocacy. In the entire state of Ohio, CH-UH Schools are the most impacted in terms of funds lost. We lose about \$9 million a year in state funding in order to fund EdChoice school tuition vouchers. To be clear, we fully support the right of all families to choose the best educational options for their children. But EdChoice vouchers simply cannot continue to be funded at the expense of public schools. Last year, millions of dollars were deducted from CHUH while we maintained the *same* enrollment numbers.

Throughout my career I have witnessed desperation for funding public schools that has gotten worse and worse. We have always taxed ourselves heavily in my community, but in the last 8-10 years the state has caused an exponential drain on local dollars by allowing the deduction method of funding community schools, as well as private and parochial schools through vouchers. My district has been hard hit with losses not because you have labelled our schools as “failing” but because we have a diverse community that has a significant private and parochial school population. 93% of the families who use EdChoice vouchers have never attended and never planned to attend our public schools. We now lose more than half of our annual state foundation funding! Public school advocates, like me, support families' choice on how to educate their children, but not to have levy income diverted from its true purpose. For students using EdChoice local dollars must be used to subsidize them since our state aid is less than the money the state requires to be deducted from our school district. For example, Ohio deducts \$6,000 for each high school student using EdChoice, but our foundation aide is less than \$3,000 per student. You have no right to spend more on students we don't educate in the public system in the name of “choice”.

You have this chance to make sure that Ohio's priorities are clear for the huge majority of families who use public schools in our state. You can fix this broken system. As MLK Jr. said, "The time is always right to do what is right."