

Thank you Senators for your dedication to the children of our state. I am so excited that you are working on fixing the state's funding formula that has been broken for so long. I know that there are conflicting constituencies and that the process you are left with is quite onerous. My hope is that you will ignore the political pressures and do right by our kids.

I am here to advocate for two groups. The first is the 90% of the kids in our state attending public schools. Much discussion has taken place over how vouchers should be funded. So much less has been discussed about the vast majority of public school kids. What can I say, this is where 90% of our energy, discussion and concerns should logically lie. Our present method of funding public education is faulty in so many ways. The over reliance on property taxes as the determiner of wealth of a community, the report card that penalizes poverty, the deduction method of funding vouchers, the totally inadequate state contribution to public education. These 90% of our youth are our future, If we wish to thrive, we have both a practical and moral responsibility to do all we can to deliver the best possible education to this vast majority of our state's children.

The second group I am here to advocate for is my community. I live in Cleveland Heights and as you all are fully aware, the State's funding method is a killer for us. The state, in all its convoluted wisdom, determined that we are wealthy even though our average household income is just under the state's average household income. We have been determined to be wealthy because we have taxed ourselves so highly to provide for our children. We suffer because the State's means of funding Edchoice vouchers is through the deduction method. Because we are a religiously diverse community with a large portion of our citizens choosing private education for religious reasons, we have been straddled with the highest per capita Edchoice bill in the state. The unintended consequences of the deduction method of Edchoice voucher funding are great. It pits neighbor against neighbor. There is a perception by many that those receiving the vouchers do not care about the impact on the majority of children who happen to attend public schools. Public school supporters have voted against school levies because they do not want to be paying for private school vouchers. We in the Heights are capped as to the state's contribution to fund our schools: additional public school kids do not generate additional dollars for our schools, but there is no cap on edchoice vouchers. Public school advocates and voucher recipients in my community are united in our belief that the deduction method of voucher funding has got to end.

Senators, there is no more important obligation you have than to provide for our children's welfare. Making sure that the 90% of children in our state have access to the best education possible is your responsibility. Your personal belief in vouchers does not relieve you of your responsibility to that vast majority of families that believe in public education. The Fair School Funding Plan is a well researched and thoughtful. It is time for Ohio to do right by its youngest citizens by passing and funding this plan.