

Good morning Senator Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you today. My name is Krissy Dietrich Gallagher and I hail from the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District where I have been a teacher, a student, a levy chair, a volunteer, a freelance journalist for the communications department, a parent, and a cheerleader and advocate.

In other words, I know these schools deeply and intimately and I know that they are not failing.

And yet, that's the label we've been given by the State of Ohio, using metrics that have been proven to be inaccurate, invalid and particularly punitive to schools with high percentages of poor and/or minority students.

I know you've heard a lot from parents who feel that their local public schools aren't "good enough" or aren't adequately meeting the needs of their children. I don't doubt that that is sometimes the case. But I think it's important for you, as elected officials, as leaders and as representatives of the State of Ohio, to remember that they're talking about YOUR schools. YOU are ultimately in charge of the public schools of this state. YOU are ultimately responsible for their success or failure.

If you want them to be better, make them better.

It's actually sort of simple. You have the power. If you believe in the promise of public education upon which this state was founded and this country was built, then show it. There are some basic things to do: Cap class sizes. Ensure arts and music, nurses, psychologists and social workers. Fund early childhood education. Give teachers the professional freedom they deserve so that they can make the decisions about how best to educate their students (they are experts, after all).

And FUND the schools. Adequately and equitably.

That's how you make them better. Not by luring people away. Not by stripping districts of their hard-fought dollars. Not by forcing communities into bitter levy fights that pit neighbor against neighbor. Not by convening studies. Not by punishing those who teach harder-to-teach children.

No. You make public education better by investing in it. Not just with your words. But with your dollars.

I urge you to pass House Bill 110 as it stands. The very name -- Ohio Fair School Funding Plan -- says it all. This is fair, this is far more equitable than any method this state has used for decades. This is necessary. This is overdue. This is what Ohio's children need and deserve. This is your constitutional duty.

This is urgent. And I implore you to pass this bill in full for the good of Ohio's children and Ohio's communities.

