

**Testimony on HB110 (Appropriations for FY 2022-23 Budget)**  
**Submitted to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee,**  
**June 3, 2021**

by Joan Spoerl, M.A.T., Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about school funding in HB110.

My name is Joan Spoerl. I'm a proud resident of Cleveland Heights and parent of a 10th grader at Heights High School who has attended our public schools since kindergarten.

My husband and I know about and value quality education and we choose public, because it brings together all types of people, in our own beloved racially and socio-economically diverse community, is open to all and striving to uplift all and excel despite difficult odds. Strong support of public education is one of your primary responsibilities as outlined in the Ohio Constitution and given that approximately 90% of school-age children in Ohio attend public schools.

Did you complete the word search I provided when I came down in person on May 17? I've attached it again here because I'd hoped you'd notice that the words private, voucher and choice appear nowhere in it. Your obligation is to fully fund public schools. Private is antithetical to the founders' vision and to that of those who wrote the Ohio Constitution. I'd hoped you'd be inspired, as I am, by the founding fathers' vision and aspirations for a public system of education so grand that in John Adams words, "it is unknown to any other people ancient or modern" and "that knowledge must become so general as to raise the lower ranks of Society to the higher"? In 1851, the Ohioans who wrote about education in the state Constitution intended to "see a system of schools as perfect as could be devised, and to see it improve so as to keep pace with the most rapid progress of the most rapid element of our social or political constitution."

Many years have passed since 1851 but it's never too late to get it right and to demonstrate your commitment to educational excellence, to the founding fathers' vision and to the oath you swore to the Constitution. We need a better system of funding schools than that proposed in the Senate budget. I wish you valued the work of all involved in the long sought, well-researched, and well-vetted Fair School Funding legislation passed overwhelmingly by the House. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to boast that Ohio has the best public schools in the nation no matter the type of community in which they're located? That would be a worthy goal towards which to strive. And again, it's your constitutional duty.

I entered the field of early childhood education 30 years ago after studying public policy in college. I recognized then what research has borne out – that generous investments in the continuum of human development from the earliest years and into adulthood pay immense dividends down the line – in higher tax revenues from higher salaries, better health outcomes, stronger communities and more. And of course, these investments **save** money. According to The Literacy Cooperative in The Economic Case for Literacy, "each person who lacks a high school diploma will eventually cost the community between \$243,000 and \$388,000 in external costs. That's not lost income...it's a cost the community pays."

We know that the early childhood years are critical for getting things right but we have to continue robust investments after early childhood, especially for those who started out behind. If I discover that

my child has lead poisoning, do I walk away? Do I punish them? Do I call them names? Do I blame them? Do I cause further harm? No. I seek expert advice, and then nourish and enrich that child as much as possible. I don't label them "failing." I care for them. This analogy applies to your obligation to our public schools and the children they serve. Pay now to improve lives or pay later for neglecting to do so. It's a moral and economic imperative.

Research demonstrates that money matters for educational outcomes, despite what you heard in one testimony. The research he cited has been discredited many times over. **Make the investment and let's work together to enact the founders' vision.**

As a kindergarten teacher, I tried to lead by example, with an open heart and mind. I asked the same of you and I do so again. Be compassionate. Be curious. Be a life-long learner. Hone your problem solving and critical thinking skills. See the strengths and value in all people and public school communities and take measures that will support their success in the long term. Please make it easier for them, not harder. And then measure what matters.

Funding public education fairly is one of your primary constitutional responsibilities. Many experts and stakeholders in Ohio made it easier for you by working hard for 3 ½ years to craft model legislation. You still have the opportunity right now, at long last, to fulfill that responsibility. As Dr. King said, "The time is always right to do what is right."

Thank you.



Find and circle each of the words from the list below. Words may appear forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid.

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Foundation of good government As perfect as could be devised vital desideratum in our Republic. Down to the lowest and the poorest  
 No duty is more pressing among the lowest ranks than the common education Crusade against ignorance Schools and the means of  
 as perfect as could be devised Common system Shall forever be encouraged No expense too extravagant Government is the only body  
 Every rank and class most rapid progress educating all citizens 1851 Public school system Every rank and class George Washington  
 The most important bill Northwest Ordinance diffusion of knowledge forever be encouraged keep pace with the Diffusion of knowledge  
 Public institution Satisfactory plan Thomas Jefferson Primary importance among the people education shall Grand James Madison  
 Public care Improve Thorough John Adams fit for the job of Democracy Constitution Efficient

# The Founders, Public Education and Ohio

## ANSWER KEY



Find and circle each of the words from the list below. Words may appear forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid.

A 20x20 word search grid with various words circled in blue. The words are: CRUSADE, AGAINST, IGNORANCE, DOWN TO THE LOWEST, POOREST, FOREVER BE ENCOURAGED, FOUNDATION OF GOOD GOVERNMENT, AMONG THE LOWEST RANKS, NO ITUTITS NOC, SHALLOFFOREVERBEENCOURAGED, VITAL DESIDERATUM IN OUR REPUBLIC, Y DO BY LNOEHTSITNEMNREVOG, EVERY RANK AND CLASS, S SERGORPDI PARTSOM, PUBLIC INSTITUTION, EGDELWONKFONOISUFFID, EDUCATING ALL CITIZENS, and METSY SLOOHC SCILBUP.

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