



SHAKER HEIGHTS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as a proponent of keeping the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan as part of the state budget bill, House Bill (HB) 110. I am Dr. David Glasner, Superintendent of the Shaker Heights City School District.

The Shaker Schools is a diverse, high-achieving district of 4,800 students just east of the city of Cleveland. We are proud to be one of only eight school districts in North America to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate Programme from preschool through grade 12.

Today, I join virtually all of my colleagues, as well as all advocates of public education, in urging you to keep the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget bill.

As a practitioner in the field, I believe the Fair School Funding Plan for Ohio is crucial because it accomplishes three basic goals: It is fair. It is predictable. It is transparent.

Allow me a moment to elaborate on those three goals.

First and foremost, the plan is fair. It is common sense that the state should allocate money based on the needs of schools, districts and the children who depend on them. The Fair School Funding Plan would go a long way in correcting the inequities Ohio's public schools have been struggling with for decades. I think we all can agree that a child's ZIP code should not determine the quality of education a child receives.

Second, the Fair School Funding Plan is predictable. It is fundamental that Ohio has a predictable, stable source of funding for schools that accounts for an adequate base cost to educate each student, a fair way of calculating the state and local shares, and categorical costs that take into account what it means to equitably educate each student.

The needs of our children do not go away because of a sluggish economy or tight budget. Allocating money for a child's future should be based on needs, not on residual budgeting. Investing in education is an investment that benefits our entire state. It is absolutely vital and it is absolutely necessary if Ohio intends to remain competitive in the global economy.

Third, the Fair School Funding Plan is transparent. Ohio's current system of funding schools is notoriously difficult to comprehend and understand. That's not good for anyone -- not good for schools, not good for taxpayers, and not good for kids. As the old joke goes, there are only three people in the world who understand the current Ohio school funding formula, and they're not talking.

The current school funding system is broken beyond repair. The fact that 80 percent of the state's school districts are not even using the existing formula should tell us the system needs to be replaced.

That helps explain why the Fair School Funding Plan enjoys nearly unanimous support from rural districts, urban districts and suburban districts, large districts, small districts, affluent districts and districts with higher rates of poverty. It is supported by superintendents, treasurers, school boards and teacher unions. It is one of the few issues on which there is near total agreement.

Regarding the EdChoice private school voucher program, Substitute HB 110 calls for the state to make direct payments, rather than taking deductions from the public school district where the student is a resident.

To be clear, as a public school superintendent I oppose the use of public funds to pay for a student's attendance at a private school. Constitutional or not, I believe it is bad public policy. However, I am pragmatic enough to recognize that the EdChoice program, at least for now, is not going away. If that is the case, we superintendents strongly support direct payments from the state. We ask that you keep that provision in any budget bill that is passed.

We in Shaker Heights are fortunate. We recognize that our district is not in the position of begging for resources. As a representative of my school district and my community, I am not coming here with my hand out, and I am not coming here to complain.

But there is a greater good at stake here. We all have a moral imperative to act, and to act now

when we are so close to reaching the finish line.

Please do not kick the can down the road once again, to the detriment of yet another generation of young people, and to the detriment of our state's economy, schools and reputation.

The 134th General Assembly can be the body that finally fixes Ohio's school funding system. You can be heroes to the state's 1.7 million students and their families. We are depending on you.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.