

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: March 23, 2023

Name: Erin Hicks

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Chesapeake High School

Position/Title: Student

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 33

Specific Issue: Fair School Funding

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 2-3 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Fair school funding as it relates to students from southern Ohio and Appalachia.

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Testimony Before the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
Erin Hicks, Student
Chesapeake High School
March 23, 2023

Chairwoman Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before your committee.

My name is Erin Hicks and I am a sophomore from Chesapeake High School speaking to you today as an interested party on the Fair School Funding Plan.

Through the Ohio State University Student Leadership Research Collaborative, we have taken part in activities that build leadership skills and, in doing so, been working alongside other public school students from around the state. This has been a wonderful learning experience and eye opening. To be perfectly honest I have been a little intimidated. I didn't realize that there were so many differences in our educational experience, schools, communities, and all around opportunities.

My topic for today is opportunity. Our public school is the heart of our community and most everything happens there. Public schools help level the playing field and, when run properly like my school, help students with varying abilities, from all walks of life, and socio economic or family situations feel like they belong. We have a couple of businesses in our county where students can take part in gymnastics, basketball, or other sports for example, but these are what almost everyone in our community considers expensive. The majority of our families cannot afford to take their children there. So, if our schools do not provide something free or for a very small cost then the majority of our students cannot participate.

When we join together with other students from around the state during collaborative activities, they talk about various classes and clubs focused on the arts, areas of interest, and experiences. They talk about community centers and places they can go as young people. We don't have those same opportunities. What we call a community center is in a very old building that some would say is falling apart and it is not open to students really. The only real activities I would call clubs are 4-H or Girlscouts. We used to have a BETA Club but we could not afford to continue doing it. We did recently add robotics through our afterschool program, career center and school working together. Our robotics team's success has afforded them an opportunity to attend the World Vex Championship in Dallas, Texas. Even though they are having a lot of success they are having a difficult time raising money to attend competitions. I can only imagine how successful more students could be if we had more opportunities in clubs like this.

We have students, especially in elementary and middle school who have never eaten a meal in a sit down restaurant, they have never visited a zoo, COSI, a play, or concert. We have students who have never been to a mall, a public park, let alone a museum or landmark. Many have not seen an ocean, skyscraper, or airport. If our schools do not have the funds they need for the basics, they cannot possibly help provide these opportunities to our students.

Our district was fortunate to receive after school grants in the past which helped promote academics and experiences, but in our small community, sustainability is impossible. We do not have businesses or enough community partners to go around. If it were not for extra funding we received during COVID, our programs would not have continued the last couple of years and once those funds are gone, without Fair School Funding, we will not be able to provide before and after school opportunities such as going on field trips.

Fair School Funding would allow our students to have at least some of the opportunities other students in Ohio are allowed. I did not understand what opportunities other schools have until I visited with students from around Ohio, I also did not really understand how little opportunity I had until these same visits. I am now more worried about going to college and competing with these other students that may have families that make the same amount of money as mine, but who seem to be educationally rich.

Thank you again, Chairwoman Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education.