



**Senate Finance Committee
HB 33 Written Testimony**

**Springfield City School District, Clark County
Robert F. Hill, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer & Superintendent**

June 8, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on House Bill (HB) 33.

My name is Robert Hill and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent for the Springfield City School District in Clark County. In my twenty-six years in education, I have also served as a high school social studies teacher, coach, assistant high school principal, and high school principal.

The Springfield City School District is in Springfield, considered a legacy city and currently the 12th largest city in Ohio. The district, which is the 32nd largest in the state, serves approximately 7,300 students across sixteen buildings and is the most diverse and welcoming school district in Clark County with a racial overview including student sub-groups of approximately 46% White, 27% Black, 15% Multiracial, 11% Hispanic, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander.

The district is part of the Federal Community Eligibility Program and considered to be 100% economically disadvantaged, which allows us to provide no-cost breakfast and lunch to ALL students. Approximately 70% of our students are Medicaid eligible. In addition, the district offers free preschool to ALL students and typically serves over 500 students each school year, which is necessary due to our extreme levels of poverty, to ensure that our students begin school on somewhat equal footing. Unfortunately, our early learning program is not fully-funded by the state, so every dollar of funding that we receive has an impact.

Adding to the needs of our student population, the district is experiencing a significant increase in the number of English Learners and our enrollment has surpassed 600 students (approaching 9% of our total student population), growing on an almost constant basis. In addition, the district serves over 300 homeless students, a number that also continues to grow. Both populations have high needs and require multiple costly special services.

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Due to the adverse societal conditions that exist in our city, our students struggle to meet performance standards and on average approximately 15% test as kindergarten ready. However, our team has created multiple systems to support the well-being of our students and staff, as well as foster the appropriate academic environment and culture that will lead to our mission of student growth and success.

In a community that relies on the support of the state to provide 72% of our funding to serve a diverse and impoverished population, the Senate Finance Committee's proposed changes to the Biennial Budget Bill are problematic and hamper our efforts to serve the extreme needs of our student population.

Specifically, concerns exist regarding modification of the capacity (state and local share) calculation by eliminating the per pupil median federal adjusted gross income (FAGI). This change causes a reduction in the state share of funding while increasing the local share. Additionally, this change will create more volatility in the state share calculation. By removing this component from the calculation, the formula will no longer be predictable or equitable, which impacts our efforts to educate our students and is problematic in a city with significant levels of poverty and the inability to raise adequate local funds to support our public school district.

In addition, the elimination of the non-transportation temporary transitional aid and the formula transition supplement results in a reduction in funding for the district of \$3.4 million in FY24. The reduction in funding does not support the systems that the district created to address staff attendance, teacher turnover and student attendance, which impact student performance in not only Springfield, but all urban districts across the nation.

Furthermore, the elimination of supplemental targeted assistance, which is currently received by districts that fall below a certain wealth threshold and whose enrollment has decreased by a relatively large percentage due to changes in how students are counted in the current formula, is devastating to urban school districts like Springfield. We currently receive \$2.6 million in supplemental targeted assistance and all reductions further limit our ability to meet the needs of our students. By eliminating the supplemental targeted assistance, this version of the budget bill effectively undermines the efforts of our district and all urban school districts to serve the most vulnerable and needy students.

Additional items of concern include:

- The removal of the comprehensive cost study for economically disadvantaged students.
- The addition of Senate Bill (SB) 1, which restructures the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and drastically changes the roles and responsibilities of the State Board of Education.
- The restoration of the mandatory retention provisions under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, *which has no credible longitudinal research to support its effectiveness.*

As the leader of the Springfield City School District, I would be remiss if I did not note the tireless efforts of our dedicated, high-quality professional staff. The efforts of our certified and classified teams to meet the basic needs of our students who have experienced multiple traumas throughout their lives and who are subject to extreme poverty and daily violence, are nothing short of amazing. Without full funding, our ability to serve students who often start school many years behind grade-level is hindered.

The cycle of poverty must be broken through public education and I implore the legislature to provide our students with the opportunities and skills to not only revitalize our city, but to help solve the societal ills and job shortages across this great state and nation.

Chair Dolan and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have and can be reached at hill@scsdoh.org or 937.505.2806.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Robert F. Hill, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer &
Superintendent of Schools