

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on Ohio's budget and school funding. My name is Carolyn Kazel-Rowbotham, and I am a school counselor in an urban district with 16 years of experience working with students in grades 9-12. I have seen firsthand how the availability of resources directly affects student outcomes, particularly for those in underserved communities. I'm here to urge the committee to include the 3rd phase of the Bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget.

Adequate funding allows me to provide crucial mental health support, college readiness programs, and individualized counseling services. Many of the students I work with face significant challenges, and funding ensures they have the support they need to thrive academically and socially. I've worked with several students who, without proper funding for counseling and intervention programs, might have fallen through the cracks. However, when resources are allocated appropriately, we see students not only improve academically but also develop the resilience and skills needed for success beyond school.

Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, limited funding often results in fewer resources for students who need it most. I have seen too many students struggling without the mental health services they deserve, and the lack of funding for school counselors only exacerbates these issues. The third phase of the Fair School Funding Plan represents a critical opportunity to provide equitable resources that support not just academic achievement but the emotional and social growth of our students. Increased funding would enable schools to hire additional counselors, implement more comprehensive student programs, and better serve the diverse needs of our student population.

I strongly urge lawmakers to include the third phase of the Fair School Funding Plan in the upcoming state budget. By doing so, we can ensure that every student, regardless of background, receives the support they need to succeed.