

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 96's Public School Funding Cuts

Ohio House Education Committee
February 25, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Deidre Hazelbaker, and I am a mom of a third and fifth grader in Loveland City Schools, an active community member, and a Quaker. I am here today to urge you to amend House Bill 96 to fully fund the third phase of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan and protect the future of Ohio's public schools.

As a parent, I see firsthand how public education shapes not just my children but our entire community. Loveland City Schools provides an excellent education despite already receiving less than 85% of what most Ohio school districts receive in per-pupil funding. Now, House Bill 96 proposes cutting the state's funding guarantee by 5% in the 2025-26 school year and 10% in 2026-27, leaving districts like Loveland with a \$2.5 million negative impact and fewer resources to support our students.

Instead of investing in our public education system, House Bill 96 prioritizes vouchers and unregulated private schools over the 90% of Ohio students who rely on public education. These cuts will force local school districts to make impossible choices—whether to increase class sizes, cut enrichment programs, reduce student support services, or rely on local taxpayers to fill the funding gaps. Public schools should not have to beg for the funding they need to provide a basic education.

Why This Matters

Public education is the foundation of Ohio's future. Schools prepare our children to enter the workforce, contribute to their communities, and become informed citizens. If we underfund public schools, we **weaken our entire state's economic and social fabric**. We cannot afford to let politics dictate whether our children have access to high-quality education.

My children—and the children in your communities—deserve classrooms that are fully staffed, programs that enrich their learning, and the support services that allow them to thrive. The **Fair School Funding Plan was created as a bipartisan solution to ensure all Ohio schools have the resources they need** and now is not the time to abandon it.

Call to Action

I urge this committee to **amend House Bill 96 to fully fund the third phase of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan.** Public education is a shared responsibility, and the decisions made in this budget will impact not only our children's futures but the future of Ohio's workforce and economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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