

Testimony of Calvin Olsen
Before the Ohio House Education Committee
Representative Fowler Arther, Chair
February 21, 2025

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

My name is Calvin Olsen, and I am a concerned citizen submitting testimony in opposition to HB96. My family currently benefits from Ohio public schools, and we want to keep them as the strong institutions of learning and not weaken the public's access to FREE and APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION guaranteed to Americans by law.

I write this as an Ohio State University faculty member, a parent of two children who rely on the public-school system, and as a lifelong advocate for learning. It is critical that Ohio work to invest more, not less, funding in our public-school systems to ensure every student in the state has access to a free, accessible, equitable education. I have seen first-hand the harms that can happen in charter schools to the most vulnerable students and know it is not worth robbing children in Ohio of funding and resources to funnel money toward a flawed and biased charter and school-choice/school-voucher model. High-need students or those with complex support needs are typically poorly served by charter schools and are frequently treated unfairly in these school settings that are not committed to educating all students but often only seek to educate those who are already achieving. This is not a model we should use public money to support, and we certainly should not be increasing our funding of these inequitable education options. We must demonstrate our commitment to the children and future of Ohio by investing in their public education to ensure that all students, even those with significant support needs or struggling to meet achievement standards, are given the time, attention, and resources to succeed. While our public schools may not be perfect, we can address the existing issues by providing greater investment and funding in solving the problems that face us. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the significant role public schools and teachers play in our communities, and they deserve our support by ensuring educators are well-resource to solve the education challenges that children in Ohio face.

I am writing to object to the draconian cuts proposed in HB96 which will take crucial dollars out of our public schools. NINETY percent of Ohio students attend public schools. Cutting public school funding does nothing to improve the state of education in the great state of Ohio but rather weakens our ability to educate the next generation of leaders. If we want Ohio to continue to be a state that educates its citizens, we must not weaken our public-school systems. I urge Ohio legislatures to stand against this unpopular bill. Ohioans are not interested in this biased and politically motivated plan.

Let us actually strengthen the public-school systems we have in the State of Ohio. I submit this testimony in opposition to this harmful bill. I urge moderate and thoughtful action to move Ohio forward – not backward.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Calvin Olsen
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