

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96

House Education Committee

February 25, 2025

Abigail Drennen, Parent

Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur and members of the Education committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Abigail Drennen. I am a parent of two children who attend Case Elementary School within Akron Public Schools. I am also on our school PTA's board, as the communications chair, as well as an active member in our Akron Community (Ward 1).

I am here to advocate in support of the Fair School Funding Plan and **fully** funding Ohio's Public Schools in the budget bill. I am writing to you today to **urge** you to prioritize public school funding in the upcoming budget. It is **crucial** that the Fair School Funding Plan is fully phased in and that the cost calculations used in the formula are updated to reflect the **current** economic climate. Outdated funding formulas put our children's education at risk.

As a child, I attended public school, and when I had children, I knew I wanted them to attend public school. Public education is one of our greatest assets and it is disheartening to see it defunded to the level it is now. It is even more disheartening to learn that my tax dollars are going to subsidize vouchers and be taken away from public education options in my city. Year over year, more taxpayer money is diverted from Public school students, while enrollment in public schools continues to increase. It is past time this funding model was changed.

As an Akron resident, we also hear a lot about "crime" and how increased funding in police will reduce crime, and time and time again research surfaces that debunks this myth. In reality, increased funding in public schools has been consistently linked to decreases in adult crime - Specifically, a study performed by researchers in Michigan tracked the outcomes of two groups of students (those who received an education in a district that received an increase in funding vs those who did not receive the same increased funding in their education) and learned that students who attended better-funded elementary schools were taught by teachers with greater experience and earning high salaries, were in smaller class sizes and attended schools with a larger number of administrators such as vice-principals; students who attended better funded schools were 15% less likely to be arrested through age 30. A likely reason for the observed reduction in adult arrests is that students in better-funded schools had better academic and behavioral outcomes and higher educational attainment; the reductions in adult crime alone generate social savings that exceed the costs to the government of increasing school funding.

Based on this study and similar studies, increases in public school funding early in children's lives can reduce adult crime and these increases in public school funding generate important benefits to society, not just improved academic outcomes and educational attainment.

There is so much more I'd like to say on this subject, but trying to keep this testimony brief, so in summary, I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan.

Thank you!

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