



Columbus City Schools

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Mission: Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

House Education Committee House Bill 96 Testimony March 4, 2025

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, my name is Dr. Angela Chapman and I am the Superintendent and CEO for Columbus City Schools, Ohio's largest public school system with more than 47,000 students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee to discuss school funding.

As an educator for over 25 years, I have seen how a high-quality public education empowers students to become productive members of their communities. I am proud that we've been able to train our teachers in the science of reading and adopt an aligned curriculum, even before this was required by the state.

One of the most important parts of my role with CCS is serving as the Superintendent of the Columbus City Career Technical Planning District. On the most recent state report card, the Columbus City CTPD earned 5 stars for both our 96% four-year graduation rate and 97% post-program outcomes. We are successfully serving our students and building positive relationships with the business community through career technical education in Columbus City Schools, and we want to expand these types of opportunities for all our students.

In partnership with the community and in response to Ohio's workforce needs, Columbus City Schools is investing in college and career connected learning, aligning education with the needs of a modern workforce. Our district is focused on ensuring every student is given the opportunity to immerse themselves in learning that prepares them for real-world success. As part of our district's K-12 college and career continuum, we are committed to the Columbus Promise, partnering with the business community, higher education, and nonprofit partners to grow the workforce of tomorrow. Additionally, next fall we are launching high school Career Academies, a research-based approach



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preparing our students for today's challenges and empowering them to lead in the future.

Career Academies restructure high schools into small learning communities aligned to local and in demand industries to create pathways for high school students to gain college and career readiness skills. The Career Academies prepare students by explicitly teaching essential skills like time management, goal setting, and self advocacy and allowing students to explore the many career pathways available to them in Ohio. With a diverse economy, our students have access to an incredible array of careers. From finance and logistics to healthcare and technology, the options are endless. As the largest district in the state, it is our duty and responsibility to ensure students have access to these in-demand careers and opportunities. Our goal at CCS is to connect our students to what's possible and show them that their future starts now, right here in Columbus.

Of course, our students will also continue to have the opportunity to participate in the district's highly successful career technical education programs at our two career centers. These programs often require specific equipment or specially designed spaces, and we are extremely proud of the outcomes for participating students. We are grateful to the General Assembly and Governor DeWine for their continued support and investments in CTE equipment grants.

However, I'm deeply concerned that the changes we're making and the momentum we've built will be devastated by a significant decrease in state funding.

Our community believes in the work that we do and the progress we have made at CCS, so much so that we were one of a select few communities in the state to pass a levy in the previous school year. Based on the Governor's proposed state funding formula, CCS is set to lose over \$45 million over the biennium. All the dollars our voters approved for the \$38 million general operating portion of our levy will now need to be used to fill this gap. In other words, our families will continue to pay for the levy they voted for but won't get the essential educational services they were promised.

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These levy funds cover important services such as career advising expansion, support for the development and implementation of the Career Academies, math professional development, credit recovery programs, newly opened preschool classrooms, building substitutes, school counselors, and summer programs, to name a few. With the proposed cut in state funding, the district will be forced to make incredibly important decisions between staffing and programming shown to provide high returns on investment.

Columbus City Schools is projected to lose these state funds because the administration's formula calculations include increased property tax valuations but does not update what it costs to educate a child in 2025. **I'm here on behalf of our 47,000 students, 9,000 staff members, and an invested community to request that the House continue the formula's phase-in with the most updated base cost inputs.** Our Treasurer, Ryan Cook, will provide you with more information on the details of the impact of these state funding choices.

Chair Fowler Arthur and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify during this budget process and I would be happy to take questions at this time, or at your discretion, Chair, with our treasurer.



Office of the Treasurer

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House Education Committee House Bill 96 Testimony March 4, 2025

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill (HB) 96, the biennial budget. My name is Ryan Cook, and I am the Treasurer/CFO for Columbus City Schools. I am here today to speak to the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan as contained in HB 96.

Columbus City Schools is the State's largest school district, with more than 47,000 students attending over 100 schools and programs. Roughly 18 percent (more than 8,000) of our students have exceptional needs. Additionally, around 15 percent (more than 7,000) of our students come from a family for which English is not the primary language, with over 100 different languages spoken throughout the District.

I am here today to ask on behalf of our students, the district, and the community we serve that you take critical next steps toward fully implementing the formula enacted in the last two biennial budgets – a formula created in collaboration with school district leaders and experienced practitioners.

The Fair School Funding Plan provides an objective, rational, and transparent solution to school funding, translating real student needs into concrete resources. However, for the formula to work as designed, it needs to be fully implemented. That means as we update local property valuations, we must also update what it costs to educate a child. If we update one without the other, the formula is broken.

We appreciate that Governor DeWine chose to include the final two years of the phase-in as a part of the executive budget proposal (reaching 83% in FY 26 and 100% in FY 27). While the full implementation of this plan is essential, it is equally important that the

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funding formula remains responsive to real-time economic changes by regularly updating base cost inputs. Without regular updates to these inputs, the formula becomes imbalanced, shifting a greater financial burden onto local taxpayers.

In our district's most recent five-year forecast, our current state share is approximately 20 percent (Exhibit 1). Yet, **under the executive proposal at the end of this biennium, our state share will hit the ten percent floor** (Exhibit 2)– treating our families as if they are as wealthy as those in affluent suburbs, communities with far greater income and serving fewer students with significant needs. This is not because our students and families have suddenly hit the lottery; it is simply a construct of a formula that only shifts one side of the ledger. Based on the Governor's proposed state funding formula, CCS is set to lose over \$45 million over the biennium.

I am here today to request that the House continue the formula's phase-in with the most updated base cost inputs.

I urge this committee to prioritize these critical areas as you consider the state's budget and thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



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Exhibit 1

General Fund Revenue State vs Local Share Fiscal Year 2025

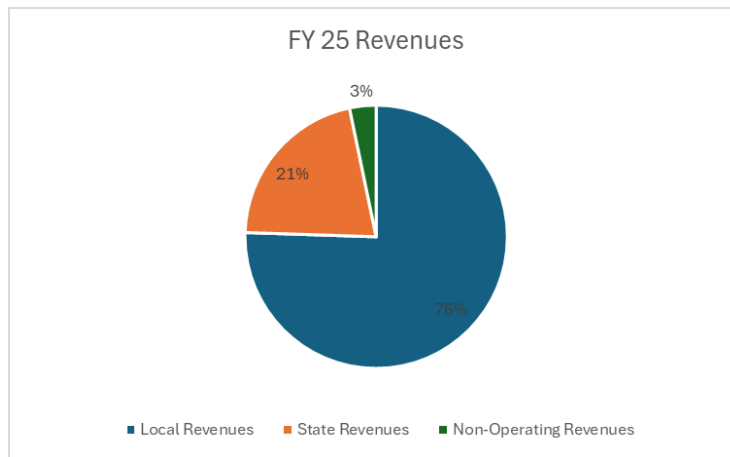


Exhibit 2

| District | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Estimated State Share Percentage FY25 | Estimated State Share Percentage FY26 | Estimated State Share Percentage FY27 |
|------------------|--------|-------|--------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Columbus City SD | 36.77% | 29.2% | 30.57% | 21.7% | 15.9% | 10.0% |

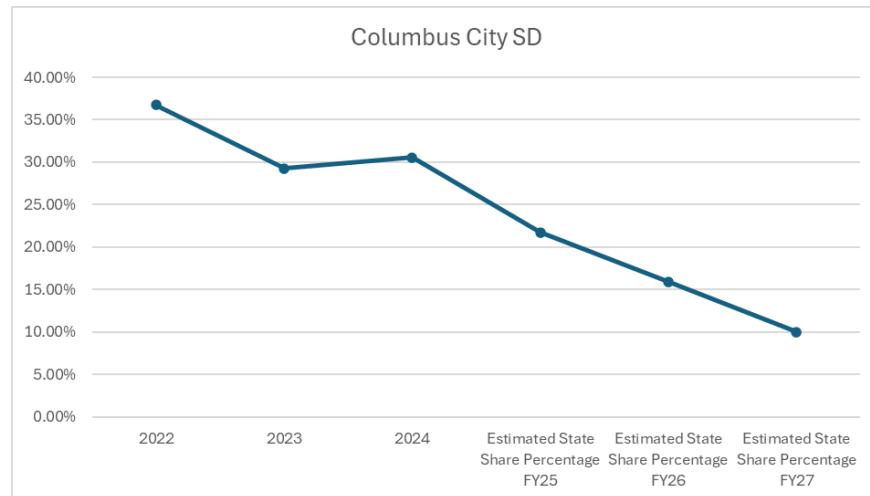
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