

House Education Committee - H.B. 96 Public Testimony (Written)

Jessica Thorne with DonorsChoose

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

My name is Jessica Thorne, and I am the Vice President of Government Partnerships at DonorsChoose, a nonprofit organization that helps public school educators obtain the classroom resources they need to help their students learn.

DonorsChoose was founded 25 years ago by a teacher with a simple idea: if public school educators could receive the specific materials they knew their students would most benefit from, student learning, achievement, and engagement would increase. Since then, our charity has supported resource requests in nearly 90% of public schools across the country, including hundreds of schools in Ohio.

In recent years, DonorsChoose has partnered with several states to use state funding to directly support teachers in acquiring classroom resources. For example, Montana, Oklahoma, and Utah have allocated state and federal funds through our platform to quickly and efficiently distribute resources to educators. These initiatives have enabled states to target specific priorities, such as special education, STEM, and early literacy, ensuring funds reach the classrooms where they are needed most. We would welcome the opportunity to explore similar partnerships with Ohio.

Our platform enables teachers to request classroom resources tailored to their students' unique needs. These projects range from basic supplies like books and technology to innovative learning tools that align with Ohio's education priorities, including Science of Reading, workforce development, and new teacher support. By empowering teachers to make these requests, we help remove barriers to student success while also fostering a sense of agency and support for educators.

One of the critical challenges in education today is teacher retention. Research out of the University of Michigan has shown that when teachers receive the resources they need for their classrooms, they are more likely to stay in the profession—reducing turnover by

about 22%. This impact is particularly significant for new teachers, who often leave the profession due to a lack of support and resources. By ensuring teachers have what they need to create engaging and effective learning environments, we can help keep talented educators in Ohio's classrooms.

In addition, DonorsChoose supports the Science of Reading by enabling teachers to request phonics-based instructional materials, literacy intervention resources, and professional development books that align with evidence-based reading instruction. These resources help ensure Ohio students receive high-quality literacy education that sets them up for success.

Beyond literacy, our platform also supports workforce development initiatives by allowing teachers to bring career-connected learning into the classroom. Educators frequently request materials for STEM, career and technical education, and hands-on learning experiences that help students explore future career pathways. By giving teachers access to these resources, we are helping to bridge the gap between education and workforce readiness.

Finally, our platform provides valuable data insights into classroom needs across the state. By analyzing the types of projects Ohio teachers request, we can help state leaders understand emerging trends, pinpoint gaps in resource availability, and make data-informed decisions to better support educators and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share how DonorsChoose is working to support Ohio's teachers and students. We would love to find ways to explore partnerships in Ohio like our other states to support our teachers. We are eager to be a resource for the state in addressing teacher retention, strengthening literacy instruction, and preparing students for the workforce.