

Thank you Chairwoman Fowler, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, Education Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the implications of HB 96 on Springfield Local Schools. The projected loss of \$420,040 for FY 2025-26 and another \$420,040 for FY 2026-27 will have a significant and detrimental impact on our district's budget. Such a reduction in funding will directly affect our students by limiting the resources and opportunities essential to providing them with the quality education they deserve.

A loss of \$840,000 over two years equates to the salaries of approximately 8-10 teachers. This reduction would inevitably impact class sizes, intervention and enrichment programs, and the variety of electives available to our students. If we strive to maintain adequate staffing, we will be forced to make difficult sacrifices in other critical areas, such as curriculum, technology, and equipment—resources that are imperative to student success. In addition our local taxpayers pay 61.8% to support Akron Springfield Local Schools, while the States share is 38.2% and further this share from the State will seemingly get smaller as the property values have increased. Interestingly if the inputs are kept at FY 22 rates while everyone knows things have inflatedly moved up, we most likely will pay more even under Cupp-Patterson. At DeRolph the States average share was 46.2% and will decrease to 32.2% in FY 27 if no changes are made.

As for vouchers, I understand that school choice is an important priority for this assembly. However, the core intent behind school choice seems to have been lost, particularly in ensuring accountability for schools that accept vouchers. Providing funding through vouchers while simultaneously reducing public school funding is detrimental to all parties involved.

Many private schools that accept vouchers still rely on public schools to provide essential services, particularly for students requiring special education. Unlike public schools, private institutions are not always required to adhere to students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), despite public schools being held both economically and legally accountable for doing so. Furthermore, many non-public schools are not subject to the same level of academic accountability—such as standardized testing and state report card evaluations—that public schools must

meet. When a public school is designated as developing or ineffective, it faces consequences, mandates, and strict protocols. How are non-public schools held accountable in comparison? In addition these mandates listed here pull staff into non value added issues that the Public Schools must address while services to It's Students suffers. How is this a level playing field?

Additionally, while private schools receive funding through vouchers and state support, public schools are still required to allocate federal funding to private institutions. Yet, private schools do not redistribute their voucher funding to support public schools. This creates a financial imbalance that further strains public education resources.

Public schools are obligated to educate all students, regardless of background or circumstance, while non-public schools have the discretion to select their students. If a private school decides a student is no longer a good fit, they can ask them to leave—at which point the student returns to the public school system. Public schools are then responsible for providing these students with a quality education while facing reduced funding (HB 96) and fewer resources.

I urge you to carefully consider the broader implications of school choice policies and ensure that all schools receiving public funding—both public and private—are held to the same standards of accountability and responsibility. Additionally, I strongly encourage you to reassess the impact of this legislation and its long-term consequences for our students and the broader community. Your attention to this critical issue is greatly appreciated, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss it further.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dave Hofer

Akron Springfield Local Schools

Board of Education V.P.