

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96
House Education Committee
February 28, 2025

Amanda Sue Fontana, MSW

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso and members of the Education committee of the Ohio House:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Amanda Sue Fontana.

I am a parent of an elementary student who lives in New Philadelphia, Ohio. I am also the parent of previous public school students. One who is 23 years old and lives with developmental disabilities, and is Deaf. The other is 21 years old and will be graduating from Bowling Green State University this spring. I am a professor in Canton, Ohio, and I am a New Philadelphia City Schools Board of Education member. However, I am writing to you today as a mother in support of fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill.

Public education was the only opportunity for my oldest daughter as a student with significant disabilities. As we know, only public schools are required to accept students with disabilities, and/or provide them with needed accommodations and interventions to obtain an education. My son was able to acquire a public education with the support provided for low income families by public schools. My youngest daughter, who is Autistic and Dyslexic needed additional support that was provided by our public schools. She was able to excel, no longer needing interventions, and as a result, out performed all of her peers on the Ohio State Tests.

However, we are losing access to teachers and staff as costs go up, and funding goes down. Our buildings are a hundred years old, no AC, not accessible to students with disabilities, not equipped to handle the infrastructure of new technology, some do not even have walls! The district has to use a good deal of the budget to attempt to maintain the buildings just to stay in code. Leaving less and less funding for teacher salaries, programs, and services for students. People are leaving the area because our schools are literally falling apart. Public schools are not only the foundations but the hearts of communities.

If you have never been to New Philadelphia, it is a beautiful city, with an amazing park, the first ever school in the state of Ohio (Schoenbrunn, 1772), a rich history, and full of tradition. One that includes one of the longest running high school football rivalries (127 years) in the state. It is a place people stayed to raise their kids, or moved back to after college when they were ready to start a family. Sadly, the opposite is happening now. More

families are leaving than are staying or coming back. The reason, the conditions of our schools. Our kids need schools that are compatible for learning, and equipped for technology that allows for the advances in our society. They deserve to have schools with walls to keep them safe! This only happens if the state holds true to the promises enshrined to our children in our Ohio Constitution.

Again, I support fully funding Ohio's public schools so that my daughter, other children, children with disabilities, children from low income families, and our community are not negatively impacted from the loss of access to teachers, and crumbling buildings. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan. Additionally, implementing the cost inputs that would allow for public schools to be fully funded.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Amanda Sue Fontana