

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Mary Gaertner from Cincinnati and I'm writing to urge the committee to continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget.

Public schools are the backbones of our strong communities in Ohio. This issue is deeply personal to me. I am a proud product of Ohio's public schools, my husband is a dedicated public school teacher, and we are raising our daughter in the public school system. Additionally, in my work in philanthropy supporting non-profits, I see firsthand the challenges that communities face when schools lack the resources they need.

For too long, Ohio's school funding system has been unreliable and inequitable, leaving too many students in underfunded districts without the opportunities they deserve. Our current model places an undue burden on local communities, forcing them to rely on property tax levies just to maintain basic educational services. This has deepened disparities between districts, making it harder for lower-income communities to provide the same level of education as wealthier ones. The **Fair School Funding Plan** corrects these inequities by using a formula based on the real cost of educating a child, ensuring state dollars are distributed **fairly, predictably, and sustainably**.

As someone who has benefited from a strong public education, as the spouse of an educator who sees these challenges daily, and as a parent invested in my own child's future, I know how critical it is that we fully fund our schools. Proper funding means smaller class sizes, up-to-date technology, mental health support, and well-compensated teachers—all of which lead to better outcomes for students. Strong schools build strong communities, strengthen our workforce, and reduce long-term social costs.

The **Fair School Funding Plan** is the result of years of research and bipartisan effort. It provides a **long-overdue, student-centered solution** that Ohio's children and teachers need. I urge you to support this plan and invest in the future of our state. Thank you.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to support the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools. Please continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan.