

**House Bill 96**  
**Melissa Meyer**  
**Interested Party Testimony**  
**House Education Committee**

**March 4, 2025**

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 96, the state budget. I extend my gratitude for the opportunity to address you. My name is Melissa Meyer. I am a middle school math teacher in my 20th year at Berea City School District.

As a teacher with two decades of experience, I care deeply about this bill because of the significant impact it has on public education. Since 1997, Ohio's public schools have been unconstitutionally funded, failing to provide the necessary resources for students to receive the quality education they deserve. The bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) was carefully developed over years of research, collaboration, and debate to address this issue. Now, as we enter the final phase of its implementation, it is critical that we stay the course and fully fund the plan as intended.

90% of Ohio's children attend public schools. They deserve schools staffed with well-paid professional educators, cutting-edge technology, up-to-date curriculum, and life-enriching extracurricular activities. The FSFP was designed to accommodate the diverse needs of Ohio's small towns, large suburbs, big cities, and rural communities, ensuring a fair and balanced distribution of resources.

However, there is a growing imbalance between state and local shares of funding, which is placing increasing pressure on local property taxes. The Ohio Education Policy Institute (OEPI) has found that while school district property values and income levels are updated annually, base cost inputs are not. This has resulted in:

- The state share of funding dropping from 43.3% in FY24 to 39.3% in FY25, despite the phase-in increase.
- More school districts relying on state guarantees, rising from 153 in FY24 to 187 in FY25—with funding increasing from \$153 million to \$285 million.
- Without updates, this decline in state share will continue, further shifting the burden onto local taxpayers.

Without full FSFP funding, school districts will be forced to rely even more on local property taxes, disproportionately harming low-property-value districts and rapidly growing communities. Ohio voters are already feeling the strain—half of local school levies failed in the last election cycle due to rising property values and costs.

Additionally, the FSFP corrected over 20 years of unconstitutional school funding, as ruled by the Ohio Supreme Court four times. Charter schools, which are 100% state-funded, continue to benefit from the FSFP's phase-in, receiving an additional \$73.6 million (5.8%) in FY26 and \$74.5 million (5.5%) in FY27. Unlike traditional school districts, charters are not impacted by the ongoing decline in state share.

I also strongly oppose any changes to collective bargaining laws that impact teacher assignments. The Executive Budget bill eliminates the use of seniority and bargaining agreements, undermining a flexible system that benefits both educators and students. Furthermore, proposed cuts to district foundation aid could make it difficult to expand school meal programs, which are critical to ensuring students receive proper nutrition. The state must step up and fill any funding gaps left by federal cuts to school and summer feeding programs.

I urge you to prioritize Ohio's students by committing to a state budget that fully funds the Fair School Funding Plan. Anything less would be a disservice to our children, our educators, and the future of our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Melissa Meyer