

Chair Fowler-Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in regards to HB 96. My name is Jocelyn Spencer Rhynard and I am a board member of the Dayton City Schools Board of Education. I am a product of public schools and I am a proud mom of two current Dayton Public Schools students and also of two proud Dayton Public Schools graduates.

I would first like to recognize and thank the members of the 134th and 135th General Assemblies for their work in supporting, passing, and updating the Fair School Funding Plan to this point.

The Dayton Board of Education thanks this committee for your commitment and thoughtful work towards completing the biennial budget bill for this General Assembly. We also thank the Governor for his budget proposal, including phasing in the Fair School Funding Plan and support for Science of Reading in our schools, as well as considerations for suicide prevention and changes to attendance and truancy definitions.

I come to committee today to join the many administrators, officials, and school board members for the following in regards to HB 96:

1. Complete the phase-in for the Fair School Funding Plan for FY 26 and FY 27
2. Update the base cost inputs
3. Adopt a permanent ESC formula

Completing the final two years of the six year phase-in is an essential step to prevent the widening gap of educational equity across Ohio's public schools, as well as finishing the work of the previous General Assemblies. Updating the base cost inputs is crucial to balance out the rising property values (something I know you're all hearing about from your constituents) and helps to accurately calculate the funding needed to meet student needs.

Permit me to tell you a bit more about Dayton Public Schools for a moment. All of my four children have only attended Dayton Public Schools and I have been incredibly satisfied with their education there. We are a district of over 12,000 students, with 28 school buildings, two CTE high schools, an arts magnet high school, a Montessori elementary, and an International school that is the only one of its kind in Ohio (I wish I had time to share more about it). We are an economically disadvantaged district, which means that 98% of our children are economically disadvantaged. Because of that, our dependence on state aid funding is high, with 69.7% from the state, 8.5% from federal grants, and 21% from local property taxes. Our enrollment increased by 465 students this year, but if the base cost inputs are not updated in HB 96 our state aid funding will not stay in line with increasing property values and inflation. The percent change of the state aid foundation between FY 25 and 26 will be 2.4% and between FY 26 and 27 will only be .9%, which is insufficient to keep pace with growing needs of our students and the cost of educating them.

Approximately 20% of our students are on an IEP. Our annual budget for special education is around \$61 million and completing the phase-in and updating the base cost inputs would greatly assist in being able to meet the academic needs of those students in particular. Dayton is not unique and special education needs in every district are high. Our Preschool Assessment Team is tasked with screening children under the age of 2 who are referred to us from the county or preschools or other agencies, and our ED of the Office of Exceptional Children shared that 49.8% of those referrals are diagnosed with autism and that she has never seen numbers that high. Our teachers are more than willing to meet the needs of those students but very often don't have the resources or latest professional development training to do so. The need for professional development for special ed teachers, but also for principals, for gen ed teachers, and for related services (such as transportation and other staff members who interact with our students on a daily basis) is crucial here.

As you know, the largest expenditure of running a public school district is personnel salaries and benefits. Updating the base cost inputs to stay in line with rising property values and inflation would go a long way to funding the personnel that makes our district run well.

Updating the base cost inputs would also allow us to further develop our transition services for students, such as career tech programs and job skills training. Attached to this testimony is some more information we have about CTE programs in our district. These programs help our students prepare for life after high school, to develop skills and knowledge for post secondary education, and for independent living in careers directly after high school. We have an ambulance simulator that sits on gaskets and has sirens so students can practice their medical technical skills as if they were riding in the back of an ambulance on a bumpy road, and we have just announced the beginning of an aviation program. Without the partnership of state and local funding, our overreliance on local property taxes would be a huge barrier to our ability to continue funding programs such as these.

The Fair School Funding Plan was a win for Ohio because it provided a comprehensive funding formula that is based on the real cost of educating our students in Ohio. I ask that this committee continue that work and complete the phase-in, update the base cost input, and create a permanent ESC fund so that we can continue meeting the needs of our children and giving them the bright future that is only possible in Ohio.

Chair Fowler-Arthur, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.