

Testimony for March 5 Hearing of the Ohio House Education Committee

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony today. My name is Ruth Hardy, a senior citizen voter from Anderson Township. I understand the critical importance of including the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget, and I am asking you to fully support its funding and implementation.

My husband and I find that we are "between a rock and a hard place" - while on the one hand, we know how critical it is that all Ohio students receive high-quality educations, on the other hand, we cannot afford more property tax increases to pay for ever-increasing school levies, since we are now retired and on fixed incomes. It is estimated that our local school district will lose \$800,000 over the next several years if the cuts go forward. Most of the voters in our neighborhood, regardless of party preference, agree that the General Assembly's school funding shenanigans must stop, and the Fair School Funding Plan must be carried out expeditiously.

Our local school district, Forest Hills School District, does a fantastic job and is rated in the top 10% of Ohio school districts, but with inflation and ever-increasing costs, the district needs adequate state support to continue providing the educational excellence necessary to prepare our students to be both successful Ohio citizens and productive wage earners in their futures. While our students may choose to attend private schools if they prefer, they are not doing so because the FHSD schools are failing them. Yet private schools are raising their tuition in anticipation of unnecessary voucher largesse, so it's a shell game at the expense of the taxpayer.

I am asking you to fully fund and implement the third phase of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan, which was intensively researched and debated over several years, and agreed to by both parties. It is apparent to me that those legislators who are trying to pull the funding from this plan are doing so for one reason only: they want to fully fund every private or community school, including E- schools, charters or other for-profit schools through an ever-expanding voucher program, at the expense of public schools. Draining public funds to support private schools makes no sense when 90% of Ohio's students attend public schools. While public schools are constantly expected to do more with less, and are rigorously regulated and tested, private schools are not subject to such oversight. It is grossly unfair that taxpayers are required to contribute towards schools that are mostly academically inferior to public schools (a fact which studies have established), some of which have been allowed to cheat taxpayers out of a collective \$1 billion through corruption.

Please support the phasing in of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget.

Thank you for your allowing me to submit testimony,

Ruth Hardy  
7757 Anderson Oaks Dr,  
Cincinnati OH 45255