

Public Testimony on Fair Funding for Ohio's Public Schools

Presented to the Ohio House Education Committee

March 4, 2025

Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the committee,

My name is Brittany Porch, and I come before you as a parent of two Columbus City Schools students—one at Oakland Park Elementary and one at Clinton Elementary—as well as a pastor for children and youth at a local church. My life's work is centered around supporting and advocating for young people. I see them in my congregation, in my community, and every month when I volunteer in a book club at Columbus City Schools.

Let me tell you about one of my students. For nearly two years, she showed up to our book club meetings but never read the book. Every month, I watched her listen, sometimes engage, but never turn the pages herself. Then, something changed. This month, for the first time, she read the book.

This wasn't just about literacy. It was about confidence. It was about having a school that made her feel safe and supported enough to try. This moment happened because of dedicated teachers, a school librarian who put the right book in her hands, and students and peers who believed in her. This life changing moment happened because our public schools are equipped to meet kids where they are and help them grow.

Now, the governor's proposed school funding formula threatens to take that away—not just from Columbus, but from every district in Ohio. This is a statewide cut that will strip more than \$45 million from Columbus City Schools alone over the next two years, forcing schools across the state to make impossible choices about what programs, teachers, and student supports they can afford to lose.

I know what happens when children don't get what they need. As a pastor, I have sat with families who are struggling—families who depend on public schools for much more than an education. I have listened to kids who already feel like the world has given up on them. And I have watched what happens when a school steps in and reminds them that they are worth investing in.

This proposed funding cut does the opposite. It sends a clear message to Ohio's students: *You don't matter.*

Let me remind you: These cuts aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet. They are real kids. Real kids who need teachers, books, school counselors, and safe classrooms. Real kids who rely on the resources that are now being threatened. Real kids—like my book club student—who finally picked up a book because of a school that had the support to make that moment possible.

Two years ago, my neighbors and I voted for a levy because we believed in public education. We made a promise to our children that we would invest in their future. This budget proposal breaks that promise and erodes trust in our state government.

The question before you today is simple: Will Ohio keep its promise to its children?

Because I know this much—I refuse to stand by while the dollars that belong in our children's hands and classrooms are taken away.

Thank you.

Brittany Porch, Pastor and Parent