

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

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony. My name is Katherine Brodeur. I am an educator who has worked in public education for 24 years. I'm here to urge the committee to continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget.

I have had the good fortune to work with public educators in many communities and it is easy to see how funding differences affect students' experiences and school outcomes. Following the years of interrupted schooling during the pandemic, it is evident that students' and teachers' needs are greater than ever. Major assessments like the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tell us that students are not reading as proficiently as they were before the pandemic. Which makes sense- asking kindergarteners to learn the essential building blocks of phonemic awareness and phonics through remote learning was an impossible task. Teachers did incredible work during this period, but it has, and will continue to take time and resources for students to get caught up. With Governor DeWine's prioritization of the Science of Reading, educators have gotten important training and new curriculum materials. However, they still need time and support to implement these research-based techniques. Cutting school funding now will impede the progress of this initiative.

While reading instruction is essential, it is only one of many key elements students learn in school. School personnel are having to work harder than ever to make sure that students are cared for from nutritious food to social emotional skills needed to continue their healthy development. Well-rounded, child-centered education extends beyond basic academics and is necessary to allow Ohio students to grow into their potential.

Currently, several of the districts near me in Northwest Ohio have struggled to pass funding levies. They have had to, or are preparing to, take drastic measures in order to continue operating: cutting student support services, teaching positions, paraprofessional positions, athletics, music and visual arts programs, transportation, extracurricular activities, and more. Teachers are already struggling to do their work; making their jobs more challenging by cutting resources is likely to drive educators from the profession and intensify the teacher shortage.

Local funding is not keeping up with growth-based needs, and federal funding is at risk of being cut with the uncertain future of the U.S. Department of Education. This makes consistent state support for the children of Ohio crucial. The Ohio Fair School Funding work group has done the hard work of developing a plan to make school funding more equitable and legislators have already committed to beginning implementation of this plan. To be effective, updates are necessary to be sure districts get funding based on current needs. Diverting these funds to private school vouchers does not support the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.