

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96

House Education Committee

March 4, 2025

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Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso and members of the Education committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today. My name is Pamela Conger-Cox.

I am the parent of two young adults who graduated from the Solon public Schools. I am a retired attorney and a product of Ohio public schools. I have also served as a substitute teacher in several area districts. My mother also taught in the Cleveland schools many years ago. (I am also a long-time Girl Scout leader and church member.)

During my time as a substitute teacher, I saw many of the negative effects of underfunded schools. I saw classrooms with too many students for the teachers to manage and teach. I saw run-down buildings. I saw worn out equipment and furniture. I saw a lack of supplies. And this was only the tip of the iceberg. I know that experienced educators can provide detailed information about the serious learning consequences of inadequate school funding

I offer this testimony as an Ohio taxpayer and U.S. citizen who is very concerned about public education in Ohio and the United States. My concern about education grows out of my concern not only for the for the well-being of all Ohio school children but also my concern for the state of our democracy and society as a whole.

For that reason, I strongly support fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill. At minimum, Ohio must implement the final two years of the Fair School Funding Plan. As most of you know, this multi-year plan has not kept pace with inflation since it's passage in 2022. It has been reported that this means that funding stays at 1997 levels. The public schools of Ohio and Ohio school children deserve better.

Current school funding places children from less affluent areas at a severe disadvantage. A goal of public schools is to eliminate these disparities for the ultimate benefit of everyone. It is well known that an educated population results in a better society for everyone, including better economy, less crime and other benefits. The Ohio legislature's goal should be to improve Ohio for all Ohioans, not just a small wealthy

minority who can afford (with taxpayer help) private schools.

The Ohio Constitution rightly requires an “adequate education” for all children. An adequate education isn’t the same for all children - it depends on each child’s needs. The state must ensure that all children get the support they need.

The quality of our public schools is closely tied to the quality of our society and democracy. As stated by Franklin D. Roosevelt:

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.

I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan. Additionally, please stop channeling **public** education funds to people who have abandoned public schools instead of working to improve them.

Thank you.