

Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 96
House Education Committee
March 4, 2025

Dr. Abra Bates

Chair Fowler, Vice Chair Odioso and members of the 2025 Education Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me to share my written testimony. My name is Abra Bates, and I am a parent of two children in the Columbus City Schools school district and a psychiatrist. I am writing because I strongly support the full funding of Ohio's public schools in the upcoming budget bill.

Both of my children have attended Columbus City Schools since kindergarten, and their educational experiences have been integral to their educational, social and emotional growth. Neither of my children came to kindergarten being able to read. It has been a true joy to see them grow since starting kindergarten. One of my children is autistic and now has both an Individualized Education Plan and receives gifted enrichment services. One thing that has really struck me since having my son reach elementary age is just how limited private options are for children who are autistic and gifted. Many private schools will not take children who are like my son. And he is thriving— socially and academically. Our daughter also receives gifted enrichment services and is growing so much thanks to the wonderful and supportive environment of her school. I fear our children will lose access to these necessary educational services if Ohio public schools are not fully funded in the upcoming budget bill. For my son, there really are very limited options, and he is in a family with many resources. What about all of the children with special needs who do not come from a family with our resources? Please do the right thing and vote to fully fund public schools in Ohio.

As a psychiatrist, I have seen how unfair the world is. People are born into families with multiple generations of abuse in a seemingly unavoidable cycle. Poverty and abuse are sticky and challenging to escape. Taking away resources for education will compound these issues. Please look beyond partisan ideologies and stand up for Ohio's children. Your actions will have repercussions for generations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Abra Bates M.D.