

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

Ms. Rebecca Haimowitz-King

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Rebecca Haimowitz-King, and I am a parent of a son in the Columbus City Schools school district. I am here because I adamantly support the full funding of Ohio's public schools in the upcoming budget bill.

My son has attended Columbus City Schools since kindergarten, and his school experiences have been integral to his educational, social and emotional growth. Asher's teachers and staff have supported him developmentally and educationally. When he experienced extreme separation anxiety in 1st grade, his kindergarten teacher would welcome him as a helper to start his day. The school counselor regularly checked in with him and me. That is going above and beyond. It enabled my son to be at school and feel safe. I do not know where we would be without them.

His teachers were quick to notice that Asher's test scores were lower than his ability and instead of teaching below his level, they have consistently challenged and engaged him. My son receives gifted services as well and when he started gifted it was the first time I saw him excited about learning. I know my son would be bored, acting out, and dislike school if his teachers hadn't taken the time to get to know him and ensure his needs are being met. My son thrives in his gifted class and 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.

It is not only my own children for whom I fear: I am deeply afraid that the proposed educational budget cuts will harm the most vulnerable students and families across the Columbus City Schools school district, and across Ohio. In Columbus City Schools, the majority of students are students whose families are below the poverty line. These students and families will be disproportionately impacted by the proposed cuts. Any systemic injustice students and families face increases the ways in which these budget cuts serve to *increase* pre-existing struggle. Public schools across Ohio provide educational opportunities, English Language Learning, physical and cognitive therapies, Special Needs services, social-emotional support, reliable meals, transportation, childcare and information access. Public education is one of the most effective tools we have to lift

people out of poverty, to ensure that Ohio has a population ready to grow our economy. Cutting funds to public education will hurt us in the long term and simply cost us more money when we have an even larger population needing social services and going to jail. We can spend some money now for a brighter future or more money later for a much bleaker one.

Ohio has a choice about what type of state we want to be and what values we hold and what future we want to build. This budget will have long-term consequences. We can be a state that looks to the future and thrives or one whose human capital looks elsewhere. My husband and I are not from Ohio. We first arrived for graduate studies at The Ohio State University. We quickly fell in love with all the positives Ohio has to offer and made a purposeful decision to stay. But, decisions like drastically cutting public school funding makes me question this choice. To do so sends a message that Ohio does not value my son's future and well being. As a family with jobs in the growing technology sector we are able to add to Ohio's tax base, while using few public services. We see it as our duty to be active members of our community and teach our son the value of hard work and community. But, we are also the population most able and willing to move. Whether we choose to stay in Ohio or not remains largely dependent on decisions the legislature makes that affects our quality of life.

Today, I testify as a parent, on behalf of my son, but also on behalf of the children of Columbus City Schools and children across Ohio. I ask that you please consider my testimony, and that you vote to fully fund public schools in Ohio. As you consider, I ask that you keep front of mind the most vulnerable students and families among us, those who stand to lose most profoundly if public school funding is cut. We live in community, responsible to one another, mutually impacted by one another's thriving *and* one another's pain. Public schools in Ohio are well positioned to nurture the thriving of students and families across the state, and I ask that in your considerations, you prioritize this vital, communal responsibility in which we share.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Haimowitz-King