

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

Mr. Josh 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 Josh King, and I'm the parent of a son who attends Columbus City Schools. I am here because I strongly support fully funding Ohio's public schools in the upcoming budget bill.

My son, Asher, has been part of Columbus City Schools since kindergarten, and his experiences at school have been critical to his growth—educationally, socially, and emotionally. His teachers and school staff have gone above and beyond to support him. When he struggled with severe separation anxiety in first grade, his kindergarten teacher made him feel welcomed by inviting him to help out at the start of each day. His school counselor made sure to check in regularly with him and with me. This kind of support has been invaluable, and I don't know where we'd be without it.

Asher's teachers noticed early that his test scores weren't reflecting his true abilities. Instead of teaching below his level, they've consistently challenged and engaged him. He now receives gifted services, and that's when I first saw him get excited about learning. Without the care and attention of his teachers, he would likely be bored, disengaged, and possibly acting out. I fear that if Ohio's public schools aren't fully funded, our children will lose access to these essential services.

And it's not just my son I'm concerned about. I worry that the proposed cuts will hurt the most vulnerable students and families in Columbus City Schools and across Ohio. In our district, the majority of students come from families living below the poverty line. These families will be hit hardest by the cuts. Public schools are a lifeline for many, offering educational opportunities, language learning, therapies, special needs services, social-emotional support, reliable meals, transportation, childcare, and access to vital information. Public education is one of the most effective ways to help people rise out of poverty and ensure a strong workforce to drive Ohio's economy forward. Cutting funding now will only cost us more in the long run when we face a larger population needing social services or incarceration. We can invest now for a brighter future, or we can pay the price later for a much bleaker one.

Ohio has a choice to make about the type of state we want to be. Do we want to be a state that looks toward a thriving future or one where our human capital leaves in search of better opportunities? My wife and I are not originally from Ohio. We moved here for graduate school at The Ohio State University and fell in love with the state. We decided to stay, but decisions like drastically cutting funding for public education make me question that choice. It sends a message that Ohio doesn't value my son's future or well-being. As a family working in the growing technology sector, we contribute to Ohio's tax base while using few public services. We see it as our responsibility to be engaged members of the community and to teach our son the importance of hard work and service. But we're also the type of family who could easily move elsewhere. The decisions made by this legislature will play a large part in whether we stay in Ohio and whether we continue to invest in the community.

Today, I testify not only as a parent advocating for my son but for all the children in Columbus City Schools and across Ohio. I ask that you consider my testimony and vote to fully fund Ohio's public schools. As you deliberate, please keep in mind the most vulnerable students and families, those who stand to lose the most if funding is cut. We are all connected in this community, and our futures are intertwined. Public schools have the power to nurture the success of students and families across the state, and I urge you to prioritize this vital responsibility.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Josh King