

March 3, 2025

The Honorable Sarah Fowler Arthur, Chair  
House Education Committee  
77 South High Street #12  
Columbus, OH 43215

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 33, the proposed state budget. My name is Courtney Hunt, and I am a concerned voter and a Columbus City Schools parent. I am testifying today on the potentially devastating effects of the proposed state budget to public education. As a parent of a second grader in the Columbus City School District, the proposed budget has a direct impact on my son, my family, and our community.

Through CCS's School Choice Lottery program, we enrolled our son in Indianola Informal K-8 in 2022. Indianola is a vibrant alternative school with a strong community, and we are grateful to be a part of it. In fall 2022, as my son was set to begin kindergarten, CCS teachers went on strike to demand smaller classes, improved HVAC in buildings, and increased pay. Our community supported our teachers and their reasonable demands, which we understood would better our children's education. We, like many other parents, made alternative plans to keep our son out of school during the strike to show support for our teachers. In 2023, our community again voiced its support and was one of a few districts to vote through a major tax levy. Our community recognized the great need for increased funding for CCS and leveraged of our own dollars in support. The hope was that this increase in the budget would result in more teachers, smaller classes, and more substitute teachers. This year, there has been a substitute shortage, and our son has on multiple occasions, been split up from the rest of his classmates when his teacher has been out. This often affects the entirety of his day, including at home where he feels anxious because he is unsure of what might happen the next day at school.

I share my personal experience with you to advocate for funding for Ohio's public schools. I urge you to fully fund and fully phase in the Fair School Funding plan and ensure the Cupp-Patterson funding formula is updated to include the actual cost of educating students in 2025. Based on the governor's proposed state funding formula, CCS would lose \$45 million over the next two school years, effectively wiping out the investment of Columbus taxpayers. In addition to utilizing outdated costs, the Cupp-Patterson funding formula reduces funding when tax revenue increases. However, Columbus residents supported the tax levy to improve our district and maintaining our current funding is critical to doing so. The Governor's budget formula abandons our increased investment and therefore abandons our children.

Columbus City Schools is the largest school district in the state, serving over 47,000 students. CCS faces unique challenges that our neighboring, more affluent suburbs with more tax revenue, do not face. Governor DeWine's budget includes increased funding for vouchers and charter schools at the expense of our public schools. These vouchers only serve a small percentage of Ohio students—almost 90% of Ohio kids attend public schools. Vouchers often go to families who are

already committed to sending their children to private schools and have the means to do so. Increased funding for vouchers removes resources the public schools need to succeed and at the same time penalizes them for not improving. I ask the committee to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan and to re-evaluate the increased funding for vouchers and the use of the Cupp-Patterson funding formula in respect to CCS.

I thank Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur and the rest of the House Education Committee for reading my testimony. I hope you will consider this testimony and the Fair School Funding Plan as you review the proposed budget. Your consideration is very much appreciated.

Thank you,

Courtney Hunt

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