

Testimony

Provided to the Ohio House Education Committee

INTERESTED PARTY

HB 96: Creates FY 2026-2027 Operating Budget

PROVIDED BY:

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Talawanda School District, Oxford, Ohio

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Chairwoman Fowler and members of the Ohio House Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Robbyn Abbitt. I am a parent of one graduate and one current student in the Talawanda School District in Oxford, Ohio. I am also an employee of Miami University, as is my husband. We moved to Oxford, Ohio in 2005 and were excited for the excellent public school options. In 2012 we specifically moved into the Talawanda School District, recognizing its excellence. Since that time we have witnessed the deterioration of funding for school programs and teacher salaries in our district and those around ours. We have lost busing in our rural district, we have lost gifted and STEM programs, we are constantly threatened with the loss of extra-curricular programs and any trips off campus. I never thought that the education my children received 2010-2019 would be the high mark of public education in the state of Ohio.

Public schools are open to ALL Ohio students and are required to provide resources for those with disabilities and who live at or below the poverty level. These school resources are critical for our communities. Pushing public funds to private schools decreases the ability for those in rural areas, with disabilities, and with lack of funds to find adequate schooling. This model will only hurt Ohio on the whole. A robust public education system sets everyone up for success, provides ample employment in our communities, and builds strong communities through shared experiences at music concerts and sporting events.

I would like to remind you of some of the statistics found by the Public Education Partners Report of Ohio's 88 counties in 2023. Ninety (90) percent of Ohio students attend public schools. This report found that "charter schools are not relevant in most Ohio counties...in many places there are not enough people to make it efficient or feasible to operate a private school so there are not any private schools to attend". Public schools fill that gap and provide the education needed for Ohio to continue its economic growth. Educated students become educated employees and educated public servants. Ohio needs these students to remain economically viable in the coming economies.

And I will end by reminding you that we currently have an unconstitutional system for funding public education. Since 1997 schools have not been allocated what they should have been allocated. This has left the burden to local communities. While the state simultaneously takes public funds to support private schools. This is both unlawful and unfair.

The bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan took years to pass. Incredible amounts of research, edits, and debate went into it. Legislators from BOTH sides of the aisle helped make it a reality. There is NO excuse for abandoning this plan now, in its final phase of implementation. I encourage us to follow the lead of our neighbors in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and prioritize public education for ALL schools in Ohio and show all families that they are valuable to the state of Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robbyn Abbitt
Oxford, Ohio