

To: House Education Committee

Date: March 3, 2025

From: Kelley Stocker, Teacher, Parent, Taxpayer

Re: Testimony to House Education Committee regarding House Bill 96

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, and Members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the State's budget. My name is Kelley Stocker. I am a Westerville City Schools teacher and parent. I sit on the board of the Ohio Council for the Social Studies. I serve as a faculty representative and PAC chair for our teacher's union, the Westerville Education Association, and am a proud member of OEA. As you can see, I am invested in public education in our state on multiple levels.

Teaching is a demanding profession. It is emotionally demanding as we navigate trauma, hardships, and other challenges with our students and their families. It is professionally challenging as we navigate a myriad of ever changing state laws, requirements, and policies as well as constantly increasing local administrative demands due to dwindling support staff. It is not uncommon for educators to arrive at home after the work day with little capacity left to care for their own families. But we are also a profession of innovators who are resilient and deeply committed to doing the best we can for our students, families, and communities. We have public service hearts. When you fail to fully and fairly fund public education you make our jobs that much harder. Why would you want to make it harder for us to educate and care for the kids of our state?

I also speak as a parent and tax payer. My son is in kindergarten and just starting his academic career. We are in this fight for the long haul. He deserves fully and fairly funded public schools where he can learn and thrive. Public schools are anchor institutions in our communities. They are places to gather, places of refuge, and sources of pride. Thriving public schools contribute to local property values, local businesses, and to a sense of community. As a taxpayer I am furious with your failure to protect my tax dollars. You are hoarding my contributions to this state and siphoning them off to the private sector. We can do better.

I respectfully request that you fully and fairly fund public education in the state of Ohio. I would like you to consider the following 3 points.

- Continue to implement the bipartisan Fair Funding Plan. I appreciate the work both parties put in to accomplish this funding model.

- Use current data on both sides of the funding model. Using 2025 data to illustrate our community's local wealth calculation, reducing the amount of funding the state is responsible for in our district, while using 2022 data to determine how much it costs to educate a child in our district, is blatantly unfair and imbalanced. We must do better.
- Please consider unfunded mandates thoughtfully. For example, requiring students to pass financial literacy for graduation is a wonderful idea. I work on the course of study for this class in my district and it is going to be a really valuable class for our students. But implementing this new requirement will cost our district around a half a million dollars a year. Facing less funding from the state and increasing costs from growth, inflation, and unfunded mandates equals a budget shortfall that the most talented treasurer in the world wouldn't be able to make up. You are bleeding us dry.

Thank you,

Kelley Stocker
Westerville City Schools