

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96
House Education Committee
Monday, March 3, 2025

Christina Vanlandingham, Parent

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Christina Vanlandingham, and I am the dedicated mom of four children in Columbus City Schools. Three of my children have been identified as gifted in multiple areas, and one of my children has disabilities.

As our family looks to the future and considers the academic and social needs of each one of our children, I have spent the past two months extensively exploring academic options in our current school district, nearby suburban school districts, charter schools, Christian schools, Catholic schools, and private schools. I'd like to highlight what I've learned, specifically in relation to my daughter who has disabilities and an IEP, and ask you to consider the impact of the proposed state budget on my daughter and children like her.

Under IDEA, our current public school district and nearby suburban school districts are required by law to provide children with disabilities and an IEP a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Conversely, out of the nine Christian schools, two Catholic schools, two private schools, and one charter school I reached out to in January and February 2025, NOT A SINGLE ONE is able to enroll my daughter who has disabilities.

Let me repeat that. I've reached out to 16 different schools in central Ohio, and every single one - with the exception of the two traditional public schools - told me they cannot enroll my daughter due to her IEP. This, despite the fact that my daughter is currently enrolled in a general education classroom in Columbus City Schools with a mix of push-in/pull-out academic support and only receives approximately an hour of OT, PT, and speech therapy each month. So much for school choice in the state of Ohio!

On top of this, just this weekend, I learned that the proposed state budget and its associated school funding formula would cause our current school district to lose over \$45 million in funding over the next two school years!

The impact of such a significant budget cut on children with disabilities - who need fully funded schools to meet their academic and educational needs and deserve fully funded schools so they can reach their full potential - cannot be overstated.

Please consider my testimony and demonstrate your support for my children and their peers by choosing to support a state operating budget that includes the full, bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan and the tools and resources needed to implement and fund it properly.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.