

## **Testimony Regarding House Bill 96**

**Dr. Rick Nutt  
Professor Emeritus of Religion, Muskingum University  
65 Haddam Pl. W.  
Westerville, Oh. 43081**

**Submitted March 3, 2025**

I am submitting this testimony particularly to call on your committee to reject the public school funding portions of the budget proposed in HB 96 currently under consideration. I write as a lifetime university educator who has a deep concern for the future of public education in our nation and the state of Ohio.

The primary issues that I call on you to address are 1)the continuing decline in the percentage of school budgets provided by the state and the consequent increased burden placed on local school districts; 2)the failure of the legislature to use accurate and current data to determine the actual cost of educating students in the state of Ohio, especially failing to account for inflation; 3)the failure of the legislature fully to fund the Fair School Funding Plan; and 4)the imposition of unfunded mandates on school districts.

In addition to those fundamental issues, I also call on the legislature to discontinue its process of diverting increasing percentages of the education budget to school vouchers. I disagree with the U.S. Supreme Court that vouchers do not establish religion, but even more it is a travesty that the state designates a huge portion of the budget for vouchers, although only 10% of Ohio students attend private schools and that money goes overwhelmingly to wealthier families—it is not giving the poor school choice, as is argued. Fund public education for the 90% of our students who need it.

I am well aware that many in the legislature want to cripple public education. The budget before you in its present state is another step in that direction. I call on you to reject it.

Of course, all these problems would be eliminated, or at least mitigated, if the legislature did not continue to ignore the Supreme Court of Ohio's multiple directives to develop new funding plans for public education that did not rely heavily on property taxes.