

## **Proponent Testimony for House Bill [96]**

**[Senate / House] [Education/Finance] Committee**

**[3/4/25]**

**[Heather Rodriguez, parent/ educator]**

Chair [Fowler ], Vice Chair [Odioso] and members of the Education committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

**(2025 Education Committee: Chair Fowler, Vice Chair Odioso).**

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Heather Rodriguez.

1. I am a parent at Otsego Elementary of a second grader who has recently scored in the 19th percent on her reading benchmark assessment indicating she is unable to read at grade level. My second grader has recently been placed on an individualized reading plan for her reading difficulties. I am also an educator in Perrysburg schools where I care for my third graders in a classroom where 1/3 of my students have required reading improvement plans and other additional services.
2. I am in support of fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill. I am here to advocate for my students in both school districts and those across Ohio. My concern is regarding allowing more charter schools and private schools to receive vouchers. Our public schools are facing deficits as many levies are failing all across the state. Approximately 50% of all levies in the fall of 2024 failed. This means funding to the public schools has already been reduced. This forces larger class sizes, less opportunity for students to explore stem fields, less specialized teachers for those needing additional help both on the higher and lower ends of the grade level testing. As a parent who believes each child matters and a teacher who strives to give my best to help children learn, I am worried about resources being spread thin. I am concerned for how we will help students we now screen for dyslexia as a result of recent Ohio legislation succeed without proper staffing.
1. Each student deserves a chance to be their personal best. For my daughter this means needing extra daily reading support. However, because of budgeting issues, she will only receive 45 minutes of support per week in third grade from an intervention specialist teacher with minimal training compared to her daily 30 minutes of support by a reading teacher who is dyslexia trained and 45 minutes a week from her intervention specialist. Continued reductions will limit that time in a small group of 45 minutes a week even further setting her back in reading.
2. Third grade reading ability dictate reading success and there for job success as an adult. So why should you care? Well, each community needs its citizens to contribute. Reducing educational funding limits our future citizens from being able to responsibly participate in our community. They may not hold jobs or only be eligible for minimum wage positions. If too many children are failed by education systems we put in place there may be an increase to the failed state test to prison pipeline. As we age we will need care takers. Each of need doctors, physicians assistants and nurses to care for us. We can't expect to recruit to these

fields if our children can't read. No escapes this or the reading crisis unscathed. Without support we are limiting the future of Americans as participants in STEM fields worldwide. Reducing funding to public schools may take us completely out of the race for success amongst the best nations. Parents and educators like me are asking you to consider providing the financial support that will allow students to thrive as readers, mathematicians and scientists of the future.

3. I am testifying to encourage each of you to consider providing adequate funding for public schools and securing our children's futures. Each community member across the state of Ohio will be impacted by the decision made here. Whether it is as a student, staff member or community member our children will be taking jobs and careers in our communities based on their abilities. Please set them up for success and show them they matter and so does their education. Every child deserves to read , write and complete in a world that is ever changing and requires literacy to succeed.
4. Today I urge you to please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan. Additionally, I ask that you reconsider funding schools that are not being held to a standard where every child is screened for dyslexia and offered reading services if they are not reading on grade level. When we know better we do better. Let's do what is best for the children of Ohio.
5. Thank You for your time.

Sincerely,

Heather Rodriguez