

House Education Committee

House Bill 96 Testimony

March 4, 2025

Molly Youngstrom Hagkull, Elementary Teacher

Columbus City Schools

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Molly Youngstrom Hagkull, and I am a kindergarten and first grade multi-age teacher in the Columbus City Schools. I am writing to ask you to protect the education of the children I teach by implementing the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan as contained in House Bill 96, the biennial budget.

I am a fourth generation teacher and have been proudly serving students and families for over 20 years. I love working with students in the early grades, because I get to be one of the first people to build trust with families as they start their K-12 education. There is no magic quite like watching a 6 year olds figure out how to read, or guiding a class as they come together to complete a difficult project, or witnessing parents' pride when their 1st grader explains their work during a student-led conference.

The Governor's proposed state funding formula will dramatically impact the children in Columbus City Schools by taking away over \$45 million over the next two years. How will that impact my job and my kids? CCS has provided schools with building substitute teachers-- full time employees assigned to specific schools. This year my school has one building substitute available to cover for our staff of over 30 full time teachers. Sometimes other district substitutes are available to fill additional vacancies, but most often when multiple teachers are out due to illness (very common this winter) the absent teachers' classrooms are "split" among the remaining teachers. Because of split classes, there have been times this winter when my class size (of kindergarteners and first graders) has ballooned to 30 students for multiple days in a row. I can't even begin to imagine how this problem will grow if CCS is forced to let go of all building substitutes. With class sizes that large I am not able to devote the individual attention that is crucial to teaching young children basic math and literacy skills; it becomes a game of crowd control.

Additionally, CCS stands to lose many of our school counselors who provide necessary mental health and behavioral health support to our students and families. School counselors are crucial front-line workers who help connect families to the supports and services needed for students to come to school ready to learn.

The impacts of this potential funding crisis will have long-reaching effects on the Columbus community. Higher class sizes and fewer student supports will make it increasingly challenging for teachers to provide the level of quality and individualized education that students deserve. Additionally, it is going to become harder to recruit and retain qualified teachers.

I am asking that the House supports all children, but especially our earliest learners and their families, by continuing the phase-in formula enacted in the last two biennial budgets with the most updated base cost inputs.

Thank you, Chair Fowler Arthur and committee members for the opportunity to share my testimony.

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