

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Michelle Barnes. I am a proud teacher at Columbus City Schools, teacher of 31 years in public education and the mother to three children who attended Indianola Informal K-8, Ridgeview Middle School and Centennial High School in Columbus City Schools. I urge the committee to continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget.

I have been teaching since 1994. I have only taught in public schools because I believe in them. The lack of oversight in charter schools, the commodification of children, the poor treatment of staff, unlicensed inexperienced teachers, and high turnover rates are all major problems in the charter schools. Our public school systems are not perfect, but they are much more transparent, equipped with more educated and qualified staff, and more accountable to the community. When children don't fit the mold of private and charter schools, they are sent back to the public schools without the monetary resources that were taken away. We should not create situations where public schools are at a funding disadvantage. Instead, we should be investing in public schools that can be vital centers of community for all students and families and as a taxpayer, I beg of you to support these families!

The fair funding plan should be honored in its spirit. The base costs should be based on current rates. I am very grateful that my fellow Columbus voters chose to invest in Columbus City Schools by passing a much needed levy. We should be able to use that funding for the priorities that were presented in the levy instead of being forced into a position where the local tax dollars have to be used to cover basic goods and services that were originally slated to be covered with state funds.

Private school vouchers should not be expanded. Those vouchers disproportionately provide financial relief to people who already have significantly more income than average.

We should be investing in our children and our communities through public education. Educated citizens lead to healthier, more productive, safer cities and a stronger Ohio. Public schools provide equal opportunity for all.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to support the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools. Please continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

D. Michelle Barnes

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