

March 6, 2025

Brian Stewart
House Finance Committee
77 South High Street #12
Columbus, OH 43215

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 96, the proposed state budget. My name is Katherine Morgan, and I am a concerned voter and a Columbus City Schools parent. I am testifying today on the potentially devastating effects of the proposed state budget to public education. As a parent of a second grader in the Columbus City School District, the proposed budget has a direct impact on my son, my family, and our community.

I have had the fortunate opportunity to send my children to both private schools as well as Columbus City Schools. Having experienced both I am in good standing to compare and, in my experience, the opportunities and support that Columbus City Schools provides to my children is beyond my expectations and far exceeds those available to them at the private school they attended. My youngest child has attended Clinton Elementary since 2021. In this vibrant, strong community he has excelled beyond his grade level and is currently being tested for the gifted and talented program. My eldest child was selected into the Gifted and Talented Program in 2022 and currently attends Columbus Gifted Academy. These types of programs, are so critically important to my family as they challenge my kids to learn and grow, which will benefit them for their lifetime.

In fall 2022, CCS teachers went on strike to demand smaller classes, improved HVAC in buildings, and increased pay. Our community supported our teachers and their reasonable demands, which we understood would better our children's education. I, like many other parents, made alternative plans to keep my children out of school during the strike to show support for our teachers. In 2023, our community again voiced its support and was one of a few districts to vote through a major tax levy. Our community recognized the great need for increased funding for CCS and leveraged of our own dollars in support.

I share my personal experience with you to advocate for funding for Ohio's public schools. **I urge you to fully fund and fully phase in the Fair School Funding plan and ensure the Cupp-Patterson funding formula is updated to include the actual cost of educating students in 2025.** Based on the governor's proposed state funding formula, CCS would lose \$45 million over the next two school years, effectively wiping out the investment of Columbus taxpayers. In addition to utilizing outdated costs, the Cupp-Patterson funding formula reduces funding when tax revenue increases. However, Columbus residents supported the tax levy to improve our district and maintaining our current funding is critical to doing so.

Columbus City Schools is the largest school district in the state, serving over 47,000 students. CCS faces unique challenges that our neighboring, more affluent suburbs with more tax revenue, do not face. Governor DeWine's budget includes increased funding for vouchers and charter schools at the expense of our public schools. These vouchers only serve a small percentage of Ohio

students—almost 90% of Ohio kids attend public schools. Vouchers often go to families who are already committed to sending their children to private schools and have the means to do so. Increased funding for vouchers removes resources the public schools need to succeed and at the same time penalizes them for not improving. Private schools are not held to the same metrics and standards as private schools, so the “benefit” of this plan are impossible to measure accurately. **I ask the committee to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan and to re-evaluate the increased funding for vouchers and the use of the Cupp-Patterson funding formula in respect to CCS.**

I thank Brian Stewart and the rest of the House Finance Committee for reading my testimony. I hope you will consider this testimony and the Fair School Funding Plan as you review the proposed budget. Your consideration is very much appreciated.

Thank you,

Katherine Morgan

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