

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Chad Lensman, and I serve as the Superintendent of Graham Local Schools, a district located in a rural community covering 182 square miles in Champaign County. I am a proud graduate, parent, and community member. We proudly serve approximately 1,500 students across three campuses, providing a wide range of educational opportunities despite the financial challenges we face.

I am here today to express my deep concern regarding the proposed budget bill and its reduction of the Transitional Guarantee. This change will have a devastating impact on districts like Graham Local Schools. Historically, we have struggled to secure additional local funding, and we are heavily reliant on state funding — which currently makes up 52.6% of our district's revenue. The Transitional Guarantee was intended to be a safeguard for districts like ours, ensuring that we could maintain essential educational services even as funding models evolved. Its reduction will only widen the gap between the resources we have and the resources we need to provide a high-quality education for our students.

In preparation for the 2024-2025 school year, Graham Local Schools was forced to make over \$1.3 million in budget cuts, reducing staff, teachers, and administrators, and scaling back student services and programming. These cuts were not made lightly, but they were necessary to address our ongoing financial constraints. Despite these efforts, our district still operates the same square footage and transportation routes, even with a smaller student population.

We have not received new operating dollars outside of the state funding formula since 1992. In recent years, we have sought voter support through income levies, but were unsuccessful in 2010, 2011, 2017, 2018, 2019, and again in 2024. We are back on the ballot this coming May, yet we recognize the challenge of asking our community to shoulder more of the burden when many are already struggling with rising costs.

The proposed reduction to the Transitional Guarantee does not just affect our budget — it directly impacts our students, staff, and families. With fewer resources, we are forced to limit learning opportunities, reduce programs, and delay critical updates to technology and facilities. It weakens our ability to prepare students for future success, whether in college, careers, or the military.

On behalf of Graham Local Schools, I respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposed reduction of the Transitional Guarantee. I ask that you protect the funding that ensures rural districts like ours can continue to serve our students effectively. We need a funding model that supports all schools equitably and acknowledges the unique challenges faced by districts with limited local revenue.

Thank you again for your time and for your dedication to Ohio's students. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Chad Lensman  
Superintendent, Graham Local Schools