

## Testimony in Opposition to Ohio House Bill 96

Dear Members of the Committee,

Today, I write to express my strong opposition to Ohio House Bill 96, a bill that threatens the future of our children's education and the integrity of our public school system.

Our families and communities across Ohio rely heavily on the education provided by public schools, which educate nearly 90% of our young people. It is essential that every child in our state has access to a great education in their local public school. Unfortunately, the executive budget proposal put forth by Governor Mike DeWine raises serious concerns regarding the future of public education in Ohio.

The proposal includes a staggering in the foundation formula funding for public schools in FY27, compared to what the Fair School Funding Plan allocated in FY25. Simultaneously, it increases funding for vouchers by an alarming amount over the same period. This shift is not only unacceptable but poses a grave risk to the many Ohioans who depend on their local public schools for a quality education.

The critical need for updating funding calculations is made evident when we examine the changes in state funding between 2024 and 2025. Although the phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan was increased from 50% to 66% and property valuations were updated, the costs associated with student needs were left pinned to 2022 levels. This oversight resulted in a substantial cut in state foundation funding. Such a failure to update costs not only restricts funding to schools but also places an additional financial burden on local communities, as the state share of funding is projected to decline in over 80% of districts under the current proposal.

Furthermore, the proposed increase in funding for vouchers represents a massive commitment of taxpayer dollars. The state's three general education voucher programs—EdChoice, EdChoice Expansion, and the Cleveland Program—provide publicly funded vouchers to any Ohio family, regardless of income. This means that even families with substantial incomes can benefit from public funds while the need for equitable support for our public schools remains unmet.

Moreover, the concentration of private schools in urban areas exacerbates the issue, siphoning vital resources away from public schools, especially in smaller

cities and rural areas where few, if any, nonpublic schools exist. This reliance on vouchers not only undermines our public education system but also forces local districts to depend increasingly on local tax levies, placing an undue burden on everyday Ohioans.

In conclusion, I implore you to reconsider the implications of Ohio House Bill 96. Our commitment to providing every child with a quality education in their local public school must take precedence over expanding voucher programs that disproportionately benefit those already in the private system. The future of our children and communities depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monique Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monique Ross

Concerned citizen and parent