



REYNOLDSBURG CITY SCHOOLS

Empowering leaders who impact the NOW and innovate the FUTURE

House Finance Committee House Bill 96 Written Testimony

Reynoldsburg City Schools
Dr. Tracy R. Reed, Superintendent
Ms. Angéle Latham, Treasurer
March 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill (HB) 96, the biennial budget.

We are Dr. Tracy R. Reed and Angéle Latham, and we serve as the superintendent and treasurer of Reynoldsburg City Schools in Franklin County. Reynoldsburg City Schools is a first-ring suburban school district on the east side of Columbus covering 11 square miles in Fairfield, Franklin, and Licking Counties. The District serves approximately 7,760 students (PreK-12) each year across 11 buildings. While our enrollment has remained relatively steady, the unique needs of our students have changed significantly. Currently, 18 percent of our students have limited English language proficiency, 16 percent of our students have identified disabilities, and 74 percent are economically disadvantaged.

As leaders in Reynoldsburg City Schools, we see firsthand how our schools shape not just individual student futures but the vitality of our entire community. That's why we are submitting this written testimony to speak about the Fair School Funding Plan.

The Fair School Funding Plan, created in collaboration with school district leaders and expert practitioners, was designed to provide a tailored approach to funding school districts across Ohio based on the unique circumstances of each district. For example, the formula accounts for the actual costs of providing essential education components like appropriate class sizes, student support services, and educational technology, which are vital in educating students in the 21st century. However, for the formula to work as designed, it must be fully implemented with updated inputs. This means updating the base cost to fiscal year 24 figures.

We submit this written testimony today on behalf of our students, our District, and the community we serve to request that the House continue the phase-in of the formula with updated base cost inputs. This will provide the stability and predictability our schools need to create accurate five-year forecasts and implement sustainable educational programming. It will account for the inflation we are all experiencing.

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As a result of the reappraisal, Reynoldsburg City School District property valuation increased by 41 percent, contributing to a decrease in the State Share of 2.69 (\$2,147,520) percent for school year 24-25. The current proposal will reduce the State Share by an additional 6.19 percent. Reynoldsburg City Schools has not successfully passed an operating levy since 2010.

During the 2024 levy campaign, voters expressed their inability to keep up with the economic pressure from rent, fuel, groceries, and utilities inflation. In the District, our operating expenses have increased by \$1,677.42 per student since implementing the Fair School Funding Plan, yet they remain 12.12 percent lower than the state average. The District plans to cut \$8.3 million from its budget next year. These reductions include staff. Reducing the number of staff trained to provide intervention and support to students with mental health or social-emotional challenges will negatively impact overall academic success as students with these obstacles often have higher absentee rates or are engaged in unproductive behaviors. As a district focused on improving academic achievement, providing high-quality instructional materials and technology will also be impacted.

In school year 23-24, Reynoldsburg High School graduated 572 students. These students earned 1,698 college credits, three associate degrees, and over \$8 million in post-secondary scholarships. As a result of the planned reductions, students next school year will face larger class sizes and a decrease in programming and resources. Currently, Reynoldsburg City Schools has a growing special education population, which requires specific staffing ratios based on students' disabilities. Maintaining appropriate staffing levels for our students with disabilities may require increasing class sizes for our general education classes to offset the increased number of special education teachers. Similarly, with our growing English Language Learner populations, teacher caseloads will increase, decreasing the services provided to these students.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) led a study to examine the actual costs of special education and recommend weights that would allow for a more accurate partnership between the state and schools. Implementing these weights is vital to our District because, since implementing the fair school funding plan, our number of students with identified disabilities has grown by 19%, increasing our spending on special education by more than \$86.08 per student. Reynoldsburg City Schools spends 166.57% more than the statewide average on Special Education.

The Ohio Department of Education also led studies to determine the costs of educating economically disadvantaged students and those with limited English proficiency. Over half of Ohio students are considered economically disadvantaged.

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In Reynoldsburg, the percentage is 74 percent, an increase of 12 percent from school year 22-23. Since 2021, our English Language Learner population has increased by 22 percent. Studies show that our most vulnerable populations are the most impacted by larger class sizes and fewer resources. For these reasons, you must consider updating the base cost to fiscal year 24 figures. This will ensure that students with the highest needs receive adequate funding.

In closing, the Fair School Funding Plan represents more than just a funding formula - it represents our commitment to every Ohio student, family, and community.

By fully implementing this plan with fiscal year 24 figures, you show your commitment to stronger communities, a more competitive workforce, and a brighter future for Ohio.

Thank you for considering these crucial next steps in supporting Ohio's educational excellence.

Chair Stewart and members of the committee, thank you for your time and attention. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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