

**Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**[3/11/2025]**

**[Cat Lynch, CCS Parent]**

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla and members of the Finance committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Cat Lynch, I am a parent at Westgate Alternative Elementary, a Columbus City Schools, or CCS school. I'm also an early childhood educator who has worked in a variety of informal learning spaces. I am here today to express my support of fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill.

Since my oldest child started kindergarten at CCS in 2022, our family has navigated a teacher's strike, a major levy campaign, proposed school closures, and now I am working with a group of fellow parents and community members to advocate for building improvements that support sustainability and health for our students. Over and over again, I am struck by 2 things. First, the incredible and diverse community of parents, students, and teachers who make up the Columbus City School system. These folks work every day to make the schools a place where everyone can feel welcome and supported. This community is why we chose public school for our kids. Second, is how often the root of conflict and inequities within the CCS system come back to budget. It is not a lack of care or expertise that lead to overcrowded special education classrooms or faulty transportation, it is the fact that as a district we are forced to do too much with too little.

The same is true for many other public school districts in the state. And this isn't an accident- our school funding system has been ruled unconstitutional 4 times by the Ohio Supreme court. The Fair School Funding plan would correct over 20 years of unconstitutional unfairness. I've heard the Speaker of the House, Mr. Huffman, declare this plan to be 'unsustainable.' But to that I would say this- have we truly come to a place where fairness is unsustainable? How do we explain this to our children, who understand intimately the ideas of fairness and unfairness (as anyone who has spent time with 4 year olds knows).

Refusal to fully fund Ohio's public schools will result in harm to children and a deepening of inequities. Our family has a whole host of privileges- language, citizenship, a supportive network, and other resources. If you chose not to fully fund public schools, our family would not be the worst hit. But that is exactly why I am testifying today- because if there's one thing I've tried to teach my children, it's that when we see unfairness, it's our job to speak up, especially for those who are not able to do so. I ask that you please consider my testimony.

Thank you.

