



House Finance Committee  
House Bill 96 Testimony  
Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA)  
March 12, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill (HB) 96. My name is Paul Imhoff with Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), which represents public school superintendents and other senior-level school administrators across Ohio. On behalf of our members, we appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on HB 96.

### **Policy Changes**

HB 96 includes many policy provisions that will positively impact Ohio. We commend Governor Mike DeWine for advancing these proposals and recommend their enactment, including:

- creating and funding the Principal Apprenticeship Program;
- expanding career-technical education programming;
- authorizing superintendents to make teacher assignments based on the best interest of students;
- creating and funding the School Bus Safety Grant Program;
- continuing to support the Science of Reading implementation by funding literacy coaches; and
- eliminating the Resident Educator Summative Assessment.

While these initiatives will enhance opportunities for students, our members have serious concerns with a provision in HB 96 that would force districts to sell a school building if its enrollment is less than 60% of its architectural specifications or less than 60% of its greatest student enrollment in the past decade. This will result in forced sales of buildings throughout the state and create unintended consequences. ***We respectfully request the House remove this provision and address it through separate hearings outside the budget process.***

### **School-Funding Formula**

HB 96 also makes changes to the current school-funding formula that has been in place since 2021, and we express our gratitude to Governor DeWine for proposing to phase in the final two years of the Fair School Funding Plan. This plan was developed through collaboration of education practitioners and members of the General Assembly to ensure adequate and equitable funding for Ohio's schools and their students.

While HB 96 phases in the final two years of the plan, the bill uses outdated data to determine a district's base cost and begins to phase out the guarantee, both of which result in cuts in formula funding for a majority of school districts. Meanwhile, the bill continues to allow property valuation and resident income data to update each year while other formula components remain frozen, also contributing to a reduction in funding for districts. According to simulations from

the Legislative Service Commission, 343 school districts (56%) are projected to lose funding next year, and 360 districts (59%) lose funding in the second year. While enrollment change does play a factor in state aid adjustments, roughly 20% of the districts who are being cut are actually growing enrollment compared to last year. This is a sign that other elements of the formula need modifications. Without adjusting for these issues, the state and local share mechanism will remain out of balance and the base cost component will not be fully funded. This imbalance will result in an increased reliance on local taxes—further burdening local communities.

Like most businesses and households, inflation also continues to be a significant challenge for schools. Operating with reduced funding during this high inflationary period will heavily impact the 80% of Ohio schoolchildren who attend traditional public schools. ***Given these concerns, we respectfully request that the House provide an inflationary increase in the base cost to bring the base cost inputs up to the FY24 level.***

### **Educational Service Centers**

Ohio's Educational Service Centers (ESCs) have a long history of promoting shared services, yielding significant taxpayer savings. Our state's ESCs serve as a national model for efficiency and collaboration in public education. Investing in ESCs ultimately reduces costs through enhanced operational efficiencies.

To support the continued effectiveness of ESCs, ***we respectfully request that the House similarly provide an inflationary adjustment to ESC funding and update their funding formula in accordance with the Ohio Educational Service Center Association's recommendations to ensure they can continue delivering high-quality services to Ohio's schools and students.***

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to Ohio's schools and students. We urge the committee to address these critical issues to ensure the continued success of Ohio's education system. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.