

House Finance Committee

House Bill 96

March 11, 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.

My name is John Espy, and I am also the proud father of two Loveland City Schools Tigers. Professionally, I serve as the Treasurer/CFO of the Loveland City School District located in Loveland, OH. The district serves 4,000 students and covers more than 15 square miles in Warren, Clermont, and Hamilton counties. I am so proud to work in the community I call home. If you haven't been to Loveland, I urge you to come and see our vibrant town and all it has to offer. In 2023-24, the Loveland City School District was one of just eighteen districts in the state to earn 5 stars in every category on the state report card. We also are below the state average in per pupil expenses. In the same grouping of 18 "Five Star Districts," Loveland had the most students per teacher, and the second lowest expenditures per student. In Loveland, we like to say that we provide above average results at below average costs. This can be further found by examining Loveland's state funding per pupil that is in the bottom 15%. Over time, our district has reacted appropriately to enrollment changes with commensurate staffing levels that we transparently post for our community at every Board of Education meeting. We are also grade banded, which further illustrates our commitment to a high quality education with a palatable budget. I would be remiss if I did not mention the torment that school levies have brought to our community. Unfortunately, with the current budget proposal, levies would be more frequent for the Loveland community and likely lead to further divide.

Through my children's experiences, I am able to see firsthand how our schools shape student's futures. That's why I support the Fair School Funding Plan. The Fair School Funding Plan provides an objective, rational, and transparent solution to school funding. However, for the formula to have the intended effect, it needs to be fully implemented with updated inputs. I am here today to ask on behalf of our students, my district, and the community I serve to request that the House continues the phase-in of the formula with updated base cost inputs and most importantly continue with the current guarantees until the formula has been fully implemented with updated inputs, including updates to categorical funding based on the state-commissioned cost studies. To be clear, the guarantee does not fund empty seats at Loveland City Schools. This will provide the stability and predictability our schools need to create accurate five-year forecasts

and implement sustainable educational programming, and will account for the inflation we are all experiencing.

In closing, the Fair School Funding Plan represents more than just a funding formula - it represents our commitment to every student, family, and community in our state. By fully implementing this plan, we invest in stronger communities, a more competitive workforce, and a brighter future for Ohio. Thank you for your consideration of these very important factors and the effect that they will have on Loveland and other communities throughout the State of Ohio.

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