

Interested Party House Bill 96
Finance Committee

March 10th, 2025

Dear Chair Brian Stewart, Vice Chair Michael Dovilla, Ranking Member Bride Rose Sweeney and members of the Finance committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

I am Kari Kendzerski, a proud parent of two Columbus City School students, a Licensed Independent Social Worker in the state of Ohio, and a proud product of public schools.

I am writing today to ask you to fully fund Ohio's public schools in the budget bill.

My family's journey through education—public school, homeschooling, and private school—has reinforced my unwavering belief in the power of public education for ALL students. My oldest thrived in public Pre-K in two states (including Ohio in Columbus City Schools), receiving exceptional academic and social-emotional support. When the pandemic forced us to make difficult choices, we turned to homeschooling and private school. While our private school experience was positive, it felt wrong to invest in a system that serves only a select few while public schools—meant for ALL kids—struggle for resources, funding, and support. That conviction brought us back, and today, with my children in 4th and 1st grade at CCS, we couldn't be happier with our decision.

Over 90% of Ohio students attend public schools and we are proud to be part of that group. Well funded public schools strengthen not just individual students but benefit our entire society. Providing funding for well-paid educators, up-to-date curriculum and life-enriching extracurriculars creates an environment where ALL students can thrive, regardless of their background. Public schools create a diverse place for students to interact with peers from different socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religions, abilities/disabilities and cultures, fostering a deeper understanding of one another. These interactions build empathy, reduce prejudice, and prepare students to navigate an increasingly diverse world—benefiting not just them, but the communities they will shape in the future.

Not fully funding Ohio's public schools widens the gap between wealthy and low-income communities, leaving some schools with abundant resources while others struggle with overcrowding and outdated materials. This inequity limits opportunities based on ZIP code rather than potential, weakening our education system and denying many children a fair chance to succeed.

I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan. Investing in public education is an investment in Ohio's future - ensuring that ALL children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed. Their success strengthens our communities and provides a brighter future for all of Ohio.

Sincerely,
Kari Kendzerski, LISW