



Fairfield City Schools

4641 Bach Lane • Fairfield, Ohio 45014
Phone (513) 829-6300 • Fax (513) 829-0148
www.fairfieldcityschools.com

March 10, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for your service, and thank you for taking the time to ready my testimony. The proposed changes to Ohio's biennium budget, combined with insufficient funding from the state's Fair School Funding Plan, will force us to make tough decisions that will directly impact our students, staff, and the overall educational experience in the Fairfield City School District.

We urge you to fairly and fully fund Ohio's Fair School Funding Plan and ensure that our public schools receive the resources needed to support all students. Please step up and fight for public school education and advocate for the following funding priorities in the upcoming two-year budget cycle.

- Do not decrease the state's share of our funding in the next Ohio Biennium Budget.
- Use 2025 data to determine the actual cost to educate a child, not data from 2022.
- Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan with the changes above.
- Stop unfunded mandates.

In the last 18-24 months, the district has initiated significant cost-saving measures. Without our fair share of funding, we will need to operate with fewer resources, which results in reductions in programs, staff, and essential services in our schools.

The funding system works most effectively when all factors are regularly updated to match current economic conditions. It becomes unbalanced when local factors are adjusted for the present economy, but the basic costs of things like buildings, resources, and staff remain based on outdated economic assumptions.

As is, our per-pupil funding is flat, meaning that we receive the same amount year after year, despite inflation levels that we have not seen in decades. In this budget bill, the base cost of education would be frozen at 2022 levels. Despite freezing base costs, HB96 does update local economic data to reflect the most current information from 2024. This keeps the assumptions related to the cost of education the same as fiscal year 2022 but reflects fiscal year 2024 local wealth and shifts the share of costs to our communities.



Ohio's funding formula has a safeguard referred to as the "guarantee." This means the dollar amount of state funding for a school district will not fall below what the state paid in fiscal year 2020. Several things result from the guarantee:

- The freeze of the base cost to 2022 levels and the increase in local property values and resident income levels shifts funding from the state to our communities.

- Under existing law, the state share of funding for our local education is 37.4% and was forecasted to decline to 25.66% by fiscal year 2029. Under the proposed HB 96, the

funding formula would decrease our state funding to 18.83%, a 50% decrease in the state share over four years.

- The Fairfield City Schools guarantee amount is \$28,664,364, but a 10% guarantee cut results in a loss of \$2.87 million dollars from previous budget levels for every year we are on the guarantee.

- Fairfield City Schools will be pushed onto the funding guarantee in fiscal year 2027 - three years earlier than previous funding scenarios predicted. This will reduce the amount of guarantee funds and result in a decrease in state funding of approximately \$8.3 million over the next 4 years (\$2.6 million in FY 2027 and \$2.9 million in FY 2028 & 2029).

Our district remains committed to providing quality education for students, but without fair and full funding from the state, the challenges ahead will be substantial and a detrimental blow to our mission. Please prioritize public education in the upcoming budget and fully fund Ohio's public schools. Students, staff, and communities across Ohio depend on it and deserve it.

As you make decisions about proceeding, I ask that you remember that approximately 80% of school age children in the state of Ohio attend public schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Billy Smith", with a stylized, cursive script.

Billy Smith

Superintendent

Fairfield City School District