

Written-only Testimony Before the Ohio House Finance Committee  
Regarding: FY 2026-2027 Biennial Budget  
Jennifer L. Carroll  
March 10, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jennifer Carroll. I am a graduate of Salem High School in Salem, Ohio, a small business owner, and the mother of two children, now in their early 20s, who attended Plain Local Schools in Canton, Ohio. My undergraduate degree, which included secondary education, required many hours in public schools as an observer and as a student teacher. As someone who's been connected with public education for most of my life and deeply cares about it, I'm urging this committee to fully phase in the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget.

The current budget proposal shortchanges our public schools by using outdated cost information from 2022 while shifting more financial burden onto local communities. More than half of Ohio's school districts will receive less state money over the next two years, forcing them to either raise taxes or cut educational programs. In Plain Local, we struggled for years to pass levies of any kind. Public schools across Ohio face this same difficult challenge all the time.

What's even more concerning is that while the budget cuts funding for public schools, it increases private school voucher funding by \$176.8 million by 2027. The data on EdChoice, which was sold as a program to help disadvantaged students access better schools, shows 55% of new voucher recipients were already in private schools (which are logistically inaccessible to a majority of children in our state), making it essentially a taxpayer-funded subsidy for families who already chose and could afford private education. Costs now exceed \$1 billion annually. Across the U.S., Ohio has become a cautionary tale.

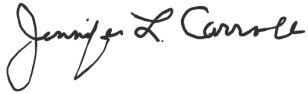
I urge this committee to fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan as it was originally intended:

1. Use today's actual education costs to calculate school funding, not outdated numbers from 2022.
2. Increase rather than decrease the state's share of education funding and keep promises made to school districts so they can plan their budgets reliably.
3. Eliminate additional funding for voucher programs and work toward ending the EdChoice program entirely.

There is so much inequality in our society. One key way to combat that is to provide fairly funded public schools for all. Public dollars need to go to public schools, and fully funding public schools should be our priority. The 90% of Ohio's children who attend public schools deserve a funding system that actually covers the real costs of providing them with quality education.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to support public schools. Please fully phase the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget, including updated inputs, and reconsider the continued expansion of voucher programs that primarily benefit those who need assistance least.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer L. Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".