

House Finance Committee
House Bill 96
March 13, 2025

My name is Emma Nelson, and I am the parent of three children attending Westerville City Schools in Franklin County. I have also served as a teacher in the district and currently work as a substitute teacher.

In my experience as both an educator and a parent, I have seen firsthand how quality education shapes the development and well-being of Ohio's children. That's why I'm here today—to speak in support of the Fair School Funding Plan. Strong public schools are the foundation of thriving communities and a prosperous state.

As a parent, voter, and taxpayer, it is frustrating to watch public schools lose critical state funding while private and charter schools receive increasing financial support. If we do not adequately fund our public schools, our communities suffer—and ultimately, so does Ohio.

We have been deeply impressed by the efforts of Westerville City Schools to provide an exceptional education for our kids. However, there is only so much they can do in the face of dwindling state support.

Last fall, we were disappointed by the failure of a local school levy, but we also understand that many families are already struggling to make ends meet. In a time of economic uncertainty, we cannot continue asking local taxpayers to shoulder an even greater burden while the state does less.

On behalf of my children, my community, and families across Ohio, I urge you to take action and commit to the following priorities:

- **Maintain the state's share of public school funding** in the next Ohio Biennium Budget—do not allow it to decrease.
- **Use updated 2025 data** to determine the actual cost of educating a child, rather than relying on outdated 2022 figures.
- **Increase funding for special education** in alignment with cost studies that demonstrate the need.
- **Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan** with these necessary adjustments.
- **End unfunded mandates** that place additional strain on already underfunded schools.

Ohio's children deserve better. Our communities deserve better. And the future of our state depends on a strong public education system. I urge you to make fair school funding a top priority.

Thank you.