

March 11, 2015

Dear Honorable Sarah Fowler-Arthur and the Education Committee,

My name is John Teevan, and I serve as the Chair of the Ashland City Schools Board of Education. On behalf of Ashland City Schools and our Board of Education, I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony as an interested party and advocate on behalf of our students, teachers, and staff.

Our Ashland City School District, located in northeast Ohio, educates approximately 3,100 students. Our diverse student body includes approximately 11% who are supported by special education programs, 47% who are economically disadvantaged, over 16% who are identified as gifted, and 58 English Language Learners speaking over 10 different languages. The district's enrollment has been slowly decreasing by less than half a percent per year.

Historically, Ashland City Schools has been funded equally from local and state sources. However, as Ashland has grown and property tax values/revenues have increased, the burden has shifted toward local funding. In the most recent re-appraisal, our taxable values increased by 21%, all attributed to residential/agricultural properties, as commercial and public utility values decreased. Our current revenue by source is 55% local, 37% state, and 8% federal.

As we move forward with the Fair School Funding Formula, we are concerned that if the phase-in is not continued and base costs are not updated, the state's share of education funding will continue to fall. Under the Governor's initial budget proposal, the Fair School Funding Plan phase-in percentages are fully implemented, but base costs are not updated. This will result in a growing reliance on local funding and decreasing support from state funds.

Simulations of the budget show that Ashland City Schools would lose \$2,398,869 cumulatively over the next two years. With our modest decrease in enrollment and the anticipation of budget cuts at the federal and state levels,

we have taken steps to appropriately size our staffing, condense software to reduce fees, and utilize our local service centers to share services.

Even with our reduced enrollment, our students' needs have continued to grow. Over the past 4 years, our percentage of economically disadvantaged students has increased from 25% to 46%, and our English Language Learners have increased by 125%. Our District is not unique; this situation can be seen across the state. Without updating the base costs and decreasing the FY20 guarantee, the responsibility for funding public education will move away from the state and onto the local taxpayer.

On behalf of Ashland City Schools, we thank you and the Ohio Legislature for your ongoing support of public education. I ask that you continue with the groundwork that has already been set by continuing the full phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan, updating the base costs, and keeping the full FY20 funding guarantee.

Sincerely,

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