

House Finance Committee

House Bill 96

Specific Issue: Columbus City Schools Funding

Meredith Dowds

I testify today in opposition of House Bill 96 regarding cutting school funds from my school district, Columbus City Schools. These funds are vital to our district to best serve students, staff, and families. My son has special needs. He attends full day school through Columbus City Schools. He receives therapy and intervention at school, both crucial to keep him progressing, developing, and learning. He is fully capable of growing into an adult citizen someday who will contribute to and give back to his community- as long as he continues to have the supports he needs from a young age.

Our district is growing and progressing. We have unique needs and challenges. School funding is essential to increase, if anything, to help us continue to meet the needs of our students, especially with consideration to adjusting costs of educating a child in 2025 and beyond. House Bill 96 proposes to cut school funding-a staggering number of over \$45 million over the next two years. These cuts will put essential programs and services at risk. Our community voted in favor of our school levy because the majority saw the need for increased funds to continue our district's growth. The voters have already spoken on the matter of school funding needs for our district with strong support. This cut to school funding would negate that vote and the expressed will of the people.

While many may rightly choose private education or homeschooling, public education is often the entry point of accessibility for many families, especially those with special needs children. Our city and community depend on our schools. I urge the House Finance Committee to consider the unjust weight and unnecessary burden placed upon staff, students, and their families if such school funds were cut. A government not willing to support the needs of its children and their future by cutting vital school funds is unacceptable in a democratic society. Our children are not here today to speak on this matter. We the people will make their voices heard.