

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Brian Stewart, Chair

House Finance Committee

### **Written Testimony on Ohio House Bill 96: Fair School Funding Formula**

My name is Kathryn Garvey. I served eight years on the Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools Board of Education and received an MBA from the Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. As a former board member and someone who intimately understands school funding, I urge you to update the cost inputs in the Fair School Funding Formula so that Ohio will finally meet constitutional promises to fund schools fairly without an over-reliance on property taxes.

This is Ohio's Time ..... to finally fund public schools fairly

**The Fair School Funding Formula has the potential to put Ohio on the map as having a constitutional and "Fair" school funding system for the first time in decades!**

Fully funding the Formula would allow for **all** of the state's 609 school districts—no matter their property tax base or the wealth or poverty of the families in their district—to be able to provide a "thorough and efficient system of common schools," a requirement of Ohio's 1851 state constitution.

I believe that you and Gov. DeWine fervently aspire to meet the requirements of Ohio's Constitution and be positioned to announce to your constituents that Ohio finally has a fair and constitutional funding system for public schools.

**However, to achieve "Fairness", the inputs to the formula must be current.**

This is not the case with the budget presented by Gov. DeWine which shortchanges the formula by using outdated cost information from 2022, and current property and income tax numbers that make a district's capacity to pay artificially high.

As explained by economist and Ohio school finance expert Howard Fleeter, 'The Fair School Funding Plan was designed for **all of the data** to be **updated annually** so that the funding adequacy and state/local share sides of the formula work in tandem. The failure to update the input data used for the base cost calculation (the per-pupil cost) in parallel with the data used for the state/local share calculation has caused the decline in the state share.'

Dr. Fleeter further explains how funding for students with disabilities and gifted students is also insufficient. "Additionally, because the statewide average base cost is also used for funding students with disabilities, English learners, gifted students, and career technical education students, the foundation formula proposed in the FY26-27 Executive (budget) does not provide for increases for typical students or for those with additional needs. As a result, despite the completion of the planned 6-year phase-in, it cannot be plausibly claimed that the Fair School Funding plan is fully funded in FY27 because the parameters of the foundation formula are based on data that is 3 years out-of-date."

As an elected official, you understand the importance of public schools to your constituents. That is why I am asking you to fix the Fair School Funding Plan that is included in the 2026-27 state budget **by using up-to-date costs**.

The current funding calculations are fooling no-one. It is clear that the math is being manipulated to justify less funding for public schools than formula calculations require. So it is time to ask yourself whether you want to finally end an unconstitutional system of funding Ohio schools, or not.

If yes, the solution (literally) is in front of you.

Do the math.