

Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 96

House Finance Committee

April 2, 2025

Abigail Drennen, Parent

Chair Brian Stewart and members of the Finance committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Abigail Drennen. I am a parent of two children who attend Case Elementary School within Akron Public Schools. I am also on our school PTA's board, as the communications chair, as well as an active member in our Akron Community (Ward 1).

I am here to advocate in support of the Fair School Funding Plan and **fully** funding Ohio's Public Schools in the budget bill (to current, 2025 numbers). I am writing to you today to **urge** you to prioritize public school funding in the upcoming budget and get our public schools the additional **\$1.8B** that has been promised via the Fair School Funding Plan. It is **crucial** that the Fair School Funding Plan is fully phased in and that the cost calculations used in the formula are updated to reflect the **current** economic climate. Outdated funding formulas put our children's education at risk.

My children are part of the 90% of Ohio kids who attend public schools, and while I want the world for my children, all children in the state of Ohio deserve schools that are properly and constitutionally funded. And while my children live and attend school in a larger district, there is more our schools could do with more money to give our students the future they deserve.

And not only schools in larger districts, but ALL public schools in Ohio, especially smaller schools in more rural areas of the state. These areas have no private schools, so no other option for schooling besides Public Schools that are currently proposed to lose funding in this version of the budget. Ten counties in Ohio have no private schools: Carroll, Champaign, Hardin, Harrison, Holmes, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, Preble and Vinton counties had zero private schools in the 2025 fiscal year. Families in these counties don't even have the opportunity to take advantage of unconstitutional voucher dollars, because they have no alternative to public school. Cutting the funds for public schools hurts Ohio.

Back to Akron, our schools have been doing incredible work with limited budgets, but if we were receiving our fair funding amount, there is so much more our students could achieve. With our full fair funding amount, our schools could bring in more licensed educators, which would lead to smaller class sizes, MORE career connected learning, AP courses, more access to health and mental health support, as well as literacy and math tutoring, and increased funds for extra-curriculars. Additionally, our students with special needs could receive more of the support and

care they need. Our Career and College Academies could receive additional tech supplies, equipment, supplies and books. Students in the culinary career pathway wouldn't have to self-fund their menus and meals; they could focus on learning and honing their skills versus having to generate a profit to cover grocery needs. Our performing arts students wouldn't have to host fundraisers for props and other supplies for their musicals and performances. They could focus on learning their parts and performing for their friends and families.

This may sound like utopia, but it's not a radical concept. In fact, there is sweeping bi-partisan support of funding our schools fairly, and to current numbers and data. While Ohio's three-part, bi-partisan Fair School Funding Plan took years to pass, it is way over-due for implementation. This plan includes incredible amounts of research, edits and debate with legislators from both sides of the aisle helping to make it a reality. There is NO excuse for abandoning this plan now, as it is in its final phase of implementation. If there is room in the budget to continue to expand the illegal voucher system, there is room to expand the constitutional right to a fair public-school education.

There is so much more I'd like to say on this subject, but trying to keep this testimony brief, so in summary, I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan. It is time to fully and fairly fund our Public schools so all Ohio's kids can reach their full potential.

Thank you!

Abigail Drennen
81 Mayfield Ave
Akron, OH 44313
(330) 631 6513
abbyerode@gmail.com