

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96

House Finance Committee

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Heather Shankle, EMIS Coordinator

Chair Brian Stewart, Vice Chair Michael D. Dovilla, and members of the Finance Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for reading my testimony today. My name is Heather Shankle. I am a parent from Pickerington Local School District, where we are experiencing rapid growth. This growth has resulted in overcrowded classrooms and increased strain on our schools' resources. Just this year, my child was moved from AM Kindergarten to PM Kindergarten because the morning class had reached 28 students, which is not an ideal learning environment for any child. Our district is expanding quickly, and without proper state funding, we will be forced to make difficult decisions, such as cutting staff, reducing electives, or scaling back critical support services for students with special needs.

As such, I am writing today to express my strong support for fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill. Ensuring that all Ohio students receive a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code, is essential for the success of our children and the prosperity of our state.

As elected officials, you understand how vital public schools are to the future of our children and to the success of our communities. That's why I'm writing to urge you to ensure that the Fair School Funding Plan is included in the 2026-27 state budget with up-to-date cost calculations.

A fully funded school system would mean smaller class sizes, up-to-date technology, and better support services for students who need them most. It would ensure that every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

The impact of fully funding public schools extends beyond individual students and families. Strong public schools contribute to thriving communities, increased property values, and a better-prepared workforce. Underfunded schools, on the other hand, disproportionately affect marginalized communities, widening the opportunity gap and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Additionally, I am deeply concerned by Speaker of the House Matt Huffman's recent statements against supporting the Fair School Funding Plan. I am also troubled by the budget proposal presented by Governor Mike DeWine, as it relies on outdated cost information to calculate funding, shortchanging our students—particularly those facing the greatest barriers.

What's even more concerning is the ongoing push to fund private schools with public vouchers. While I believe that every family should have choices in education, I strongly oppose using public funds to support private schools—especially when our public schools are struggling to

meet the needs of all students. It is critical that we prioritize funding our public schools properly before we allocate taxpayer money to institutions that are not held to the same standards of accountability as public schools. Our children deserve well-funded, well-resourced schools, and they should not have to compete for those resources with private institutions.

Moreover, our reliance on local tax levies is becoming increasingly difficult as property values rise, and voters are less willing to approve new taxes. This over-reliance puts the burden on families and prevents schools from having the steady, sustainable funding they need to provide the high-quality education all students deserve.

I urge this committee to prioritize the full funding of Ohio's public schools in the budget bill. The success of our students and the future of our communities depend on it. I ask that you consider my testimony and vote in favor of the Fair School Funding Plan to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to a quality education.

Ohio's constitution promises our children the right to a quality public education. Please do not let this promise be broken. I ask you to stand firm in support of the Fair School Funding Plan, advocate for it to be fully funded in the upcoming budget, and reject efforts to further divert public funds to private schools. Our children's futures depend on it.

Thank you for your time and your service. I look forward to hearing from you and am happy to discuss this issue further.