

**Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**4/1/25**

**Carla Blackmar, Parent**

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Carla Blackmar. I am a parent of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader and a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Talawanda School District. I am so grateful for the excellent education that my children have received in Ohio's public schools to this point.

I am writing to express my concern that the proposed budget (HB 96) would erode the quality of Ohio's public education by slashing millions of dollars from public schools at the expense of funding school voucher programs accessed by students who are overwhelmingly from higher income families. I find it shocking that a high school student can receive a voucher worth over \$8,000 from the State of Ohio, while the per-pupil high school reimbursement from the State of Ohio for my district is under \$2,000.

We know that it costs far more than \$1-2,000 a year to provide a student a quality education—particularly in rural areas like mine where districts bear significant transportation costs. The implicit assumption of this budget is that the only students that matter are the ones whose parents send them to private school.

But the truth is that all of Ohio's youth matter. If we fail to provide transportation to rural students, cutting to the minimum state requirements (no busing for high school) as our district has done, we see that families will stop sending their children to traditional high school. Kids doing school online are kids that are more isolated, kids that don't have the opportunity to participate in sports and student organizations, kids that are missing out on the vital citizenry skills that come with being part of a school community.

When we require traditional high schools to foot the bill for pupils in their district to attend technical and trade schools, or to attend college-level classes (as Talawanda does), we again undercut the financing and vitality of traditional public school communities. Choice is a good thing, but not at the expense of a thriving public high school.

When the Ohio legislature cuts funding for public education, the burden falls squarely on your voters and your community. I would like to have a full-time job, but I don't know how I could if I'm expected to drive my students to and from school twice a day, so I stay part time. Many Ohio businesses are held back by their inability to hire workers—as you seek to understand this, take a good hard look at your chronic underfunding of public education.

Please reconsider this budget. I ask that you fully fund Ohio's public education, and re-think voucher expansion. Hurting public education hurts us all.

Carla Blackmar