

Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 96

House Finance Committee

April 3, 2025

Molly Davis, CCS Parent and Voter

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

My name is Molly Davis, and I am a Columbus City Schools parent and concerned voter. I am testifying today on the devastating effects of cuts to public education in the proposed state budget. As a parent of a second grader in the Columbus City School District, the proposed budget cuts have a direct impact on my son, his future, my family, and our community.

I grew up in the Dublin City Schools and my son now attends Columbus City Schools. To see first-hand the disparity in educational quality between these two districts is alarming. My child and his CCS peers do not deserve less than students in the affluent suburbs. The proposed state budget sends a clear message: our legislators believe CCS students deserve less than their peers in wealthier suburbs. The solution is not diverting public dollars to private school vouchers—it is ensuring that Ohio's public schools, which serve the vast majority of our state's children, are fully funded. It's time for lawmakers to prioritize public education in Ohio.

Our family has stood strong with Columbus City Schools and its teachers, and we will continue to do so. In fall 2022, as my son was set to begin kindergarten, CCS teachers went on strike to demand smaller classes, improved HVAC in buildings, full-time specialists in elementary schools, and increased pay. We, like many other parents, made alternative plans to keep our son out of school during the strike to show support for our teachers. We understood that our teachers were not only fighting for themselves but fighting for our children and their futures. In 2023, our community again voiced its support and was one of a few districts in the state to vote through a major tax levy. Our community recognized the need for increased funding for CCS and leveraged of our own dollars in support. The governor's budget claims to prioritize children, while ignoring the demands of the community and educators in the state's largest district.

I share my personal experience with you as a passionate advocate for Ohio's public schools, because every child deserves access to a high-quality education. Fully funding and fully phasing in the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) is not just an investment in our schools, it's an investment in the future of Ohio. The FSFP ensures students learn from well-paid professional educators, have access to cutting-edge technology, engage with an up-to-date curriculum, and participate in life-enriching extracurriculars—the very essentials our CCS teachers fought for during their 2022 strike. But this plan isn't just about Columbus. It's about every community, from small towns to large suburbs, big cities to rural areas. The FSFP recognizes the different needs of these Ohio's diverse communities, so that that every child can attend a school that is equipped to help them thrive. I urge you to take decisive action and fully fund the FSFP to build a stronger education system in our state.

I urge you to ensure the Cupp-Patterson funding formula is updated to include the actual cost of educating students in 2025. In addition to utilizing outdated costs, the Cupp-Patterson funding formula reduces funding when tax revenue increases. However, Columbus residents supported

the tax levy to improve our district and maintaining our current funding is critical to doing so. Based on the governor's proposed state funding formula, CCS would lose \$45 million over the next two school years, effectively wiping out the investment of Columbus taxpayers. Without FSFP, districts will continue to over-rely on property taxes, which will continue to disadvantage those districts with lower property values. Governor DeWine's budget formula abandons our increased investment and therefore abandons our children.

Governor DeWine's budget prioritizes increased funding for vouchers and charter schools, removing critical resources from Ohio's public schools—the backbone of our education system. These vouchers benefit only a small fraction of students, while nearly 90% of Ohio's children rely on public schools for their education. Moreover, vouchers often serve families who are already financially equipped to send their children to private schools, leaving public schools underfunded and struggling to meet the needs of the majority. This approach undermines the success of public schools and unfairly penalizes them for challenges they face due to insufficient funding. I urge the committee to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan, to update the Cupp-Patterson funding formula to reflect current costs, and to reconsider the allocation of increased funding for vouchers to ensure equitable and effective education for all Ohio students.

I thank Chair Brian Stewart and the rest of the House Finance Committee for reading my testimony. I hope you will consider this testimony and alternative solutions as you review the proposed budget. Your consideration is very much appreciated.