

Testimony for House Bill 96
House Finance Committee
April 3, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jackie Bahas and I am a parent in the Pickerington Local School District. I am here today in support of fully funding Ohio's public schools and your votes in favor of the Fair School Funding Plan.

Stripping funding from our public schools is the last thing we need to be doing right now. Because for a lot of communities, like Pickerington, putting the financial burden back on the local community to pass the levies and bonds won't fill the void left by our State's support.

Pickerington is one of the fastest growing cities in Ohio. And we feel the pinch. Over the last ten years, Pickerington has grown exponentially, and we want strong schools; however, most of our residents don't have the resources to spare in order to pass levies. Because of this, I have watched my children, their classmates, and teachers struggle in school due to overcrowding and underfunding.

My oldest daughter Ellie is in 3rd grade this year. She loves math, dance, and going hiking with her Girl Scout troop. For the last two years, her first and second grade teachers were handling classes with nearly 30 kids. Now, I don't know about you, but for me I can barely maintain 12 girl scouts for an hour, let alone nearly three times that amount of kids for a whole day. Sadly, in First grade, Ellie's teacher put in her two-weeks notice right before spring break. This teacher was a wonderful mentor and instructor, earning the Innovative Educator Award from the Henry Ford Organization in 2019, but now she was burned out from the physical and mental load that our underfunded school district had tasked her with. With the overcrowding, students weren't able to focus and learn what they needed; students acted out more, physically and verbally, and kids got overlooked. I went in every Friday to help the substitute as best I could, but with a full-time job of my own, there was only so much I could do as a parent.

This year is the first year Ellie's class is under 25 students. Due to a limited bond Pickerington recently passed, our schools were able to hire a few new teachers and I can feel the difference. Ellie comes home happier and more engaged. She's excited to tell us about what she's been learning. But it isn't enough to protect us from falling behind again, especially if the State withdraws its funding.

I am fearful of the years to come with the most recent trajectory of our State. Just before this detrimental turn, Governor DeWine, Representative Young, and others did such good work to include the Science of Reading in our schools and have set Ohio children up for success. Don't cut that success short. As Representative Young has said before, "We've got to do something[.]" "This is the future, not to be trite, but this is the future of our state." Representative Young is right, our children are the future. We need to fully fund our schools so that our children and grandchildren can continue to learn and grow to make Ohio the beautiful community we know it is.

I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes on the Fair School Funding Plan.
Thank you.