

**Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**4.2.2025**

**Molly Farrell, Columbus City Schools Parent**  
**Co-Leader of Integrated Schools Columbus Chapter**

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 Molly Farrell, and I am the parent of two children at Weinland Park Elementary in Columbus City Schools. Also, three years ago along with other parents I helped co-found the Columbus chapter of Integrated Schools. Integrated Schools is a national movement that prepares families with racial or economic privilege to commit to integrating our children, driving new narratives about education, and advocating for justice in our public schools. We envision a racially and socioeconomically integrated public school system where power and resources are shared equitably, humanity is valued unconditionally and all communities reap the benefits. I also co-lead the first Girl Scout Troop based at Weinland Park elementary in recent memory, and we are taking our girls on their first camping trip this month.

All of the work I do as a mother, and in talking to other parents about centering equity and integration in their school choice for their kids, and working with my co-leaders of our Girl Scout troop, arises from my fundamental core values that every child deserves an enriching, high-quality education no matter their zip code, race, ethnicity, or family income. Public schools are absolutely essential to this value.

I am testifying to you today about my strong support of fully and fairly funding Ohio's public schools this year in our State budget. Our public schools are hubs in our community that make our families' quality of lives better. My children have absolutely thrived in their integrating public school where almost all of the families qualify for free or reduced price lunch. My oldest daughter recently had the highest score in the entire district—the largest district in the state—on the third grade state tests. My husband and I both attended private schools, but wanted something better for our children, and so enrolled them at Weinland Park, and it was one of the best decisions we have ever made as parents. Our children, unlike us growing up, have friends who are different from them, and are comfortable in spaces where they are the only or one of a few white children—experiences neither their father nor I ever had. They and their classmates in public school are ready to lead our multiracial democracy in the twenty-first century, thanks to public schools.

Special education, school lunches, and our schools' trauma-informed staff are all absolutely essential to making it the place for children to thrive that it is today. We need a fair school funding plan to make sure that the children in Weinland Park have just as strong a start in life as the children in Upper Arlington or Olentangy Schools. All Ohio kids deserve a high quality education, and access to the resources needed to help them thrive.

Cutting funding for public schools would devastate this community that I love. Many of our families face tremendous challenges at home, and already the school works hard to meet those needs. They need more funding, not less. We need public schools that everyone can thrive in, and as someone who talks with parents with racial or economic privilege about school choice, cutting resources makes choosing equity and integration even harder for parents whose privilege gives them the option to segregate themselves. We need well-resourced public schools where all children learn together, or else there is little hope that our people will learn to live together, and understand each other.

The proposed cuts to public education funding, which my children and almost all of Ohio children go to learn about the world in their home away from home, would devastate my family, our community at Weinland Park, and children in Columbus and around the state. State. I ask that you please consider my testimony and take action to fully and fairly fund Ohio's public schools.

Thank you.