

Interested Party Testimony of Substitute House Bill 96

House Finance Committee

April 8, 2025

Camille Bendick

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Camille Bendick, and I am the parent of 3 children that have graduated from Ohio's public schools with one more about to graduate in May. Because of the quality of Ohio schools, they received a solid education with various academic, social, and athletic opportunities. I am writing to urge you to support full and ongoing funding of the Fair School Funding Plan. Our children deserve quality education no matter where they live, and this formula is the most equitable, thoughtful approach our state has seen in decades. The Fair School Funding Formula is based on what it costs to educate a student, while also considering a local community's ability to contribute. That's fair—and it's what Ohio's children and families deserve. As it stands, too many school districts are still relying on outdated or inadequate funding mechanisms that create huge disparities in opportunity and outcomes. Since 90% of Ohio's school-age children attend one of Ohio's public schools, fully funding Ohio's public schools should be a priority of the budget. However, the Substitute Bill offered by the House does quite the opposite of this. The original budget proposal by Governor Dewine was underfunding Ohio's Public Schools by \$103.4 million over the next two years because the inputs being used were from FY 2022. Like any math formula, if you do not enter all the variables correctly, it does not work correctly. This does not mean the formula needs to be thrown out as the Substitute House Bill has done. The Substitute House Bill wants to abandon the Fair School Funding Plan, underfunding Ohio public schools by \$2.75 billion over the next two years and providing just 10% of what the state should

be contributing to fund Ohio children's education. It all adds up to major cuts for public school communities, who then must decide whether to raise local taxes or let their schools go without. This most definitely negatively impacts the students in the district, and results in the local taxpayers being asked to pay more.

Fully funding the Fair School Funding Formula means:

- Smaller class sizes and more individual attention for students
- Up-to-date resources, safe buildings, and modern technology
- Access to critical programs, like career tech, gifted education, mental health services, and the arts
- A fairer and more stable system for every community—not just those with a strong property tax base

As a parent, I want to see all children in Ohio receive the support and resources they need to succeed, regardless of their ZIP code. I strongly believe that continuing to fully implement and fund this formula is one of the most important investments we can make in our state's future. I urge you to reconsider the priorities in the budget to ensure the Fair School Funding Plan receives full and sustainable funding in the state budget.

Please continue to champion this issue and ensure the Fair School Funding Plan receives full and sustainable funding in the state budget, providing Ohio's children with the future they deserve. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to all of Ohio's children and families.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Camille Bendick