

Interested Party Testimony of Substitute House Bill 96

House Finance Committee April 8, 2025

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 Matthew Bendick, and I am the parent of 4 children that by May of this year will all have graduated from Ohio's public schools. The three oldest had excellent experiences in the Olentangy and Copley school districts. And if I am honest, a far better educational and extracurricular experience than I received attending a very expensive private school. I will add, as it might make a difference to some of you on this committee, I am also a registered Republican.

I am writing with quite a number of concerns but will focus on only a couple here today. First, let me express my deep disappointment at the approach certain members of this body have taken to obfuscate the facts around school funding while working to turbocharge a process with what seems to be the express intent of minimizing the time and input from your constituents. The education of our children, I would think, should warrant open and clear conversations and dialogue with Ohioans. 90% of Ohio's school-age children attend Ohio's Public schools and fully funding these schools utilizing a transparent and fair approach should be the highest priority. Instead, the Substitute Bill now proposed does the opposite and is being done in what is best described as 'railroading'. The end result will be some sort of declared victory for the taxpayers as we then are forced to turn around and raise taxes further to fund our schools. This will likely be doubly true in my Olentangy school district.

Second, I would like to address the Voucher plan within this bill. None of you can argue with a straight face that this voucher expansion is anything more than a siphon of critical public school funds to provide a windfall for private schools and a tax break for wealthy families. Every piece of data points to this. The public school enrollment has grown, so the same children attend these schools, now with fewer funds to support. These vouchers are plain and simple a wealth transfer from the lower income students to the wealthy who are already happily paying for the private school tuition. Worse still, for students in the Olentangy school district, you are willing to pay vouchers in excess of \$8,000 to private school students, but the state funds less than \$2,000 for every public school student in the district.

I am responsible for a very large division of one of the Fortune 500 companies in the state of Ohio. As a leader I look to how I can position my organization for both current and future success. This will be my legacy. I truly at a loss as to how our Ohio House of Representatives sees this process and this Bill as a legacy they will leave on the future of Ohio.

I urge you to reconsider both your process and this Bill and instead champion the Fair School Funding Formula to ensure our schools and our children have the funding and future they deserve.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to each of Ohio's children and their families.

Matthew Bendick

