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Dr. Jim Fritz, Superintendent

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Ohio House of Representatives – Ways and Means Committee

Testimony on House Bills 186 and 335

Submitted by: Dr. Jim Fritz, Superintendent, Oregon City Schools

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding House Bills 186 and 335. As Superintendent of Oregon City Schools for the last year and a half, and previous superintendent of the Anthony Wayne Local Schools for fourteen years, I urge you to consider the long-term consequences these proposals may have on our schools, communities, and the families we serve.

A Shifting Burden

In 1991, Ohio homeowners and farmers contributed 47% of school property tax revenue. Today, that share has climbed to nearly 70%. Meanwhile, inflation-adjusted state funding for education has increased just 6% per pupil over the past 22 years. Ohio now ranks 45th nationally in state support for public schools.

This shift has placed an increasing burden on local taxpayers to fund essential services, particularly education. Our districts have responded with resilience—consolidating operations, sharing services, and stretching every dollar. But the reality is that funding cuts don't just impact classrooms—they affect entire communities, especially where schools are among the largest employers.

The Impact of Losing Inside Millage

House Bill 335 proposes eliminating inside millage—a guaranteed source of revenue that has sustained public schools and local governments for generations. For Oregon City Schools, this change would mean the loss of millions of dollars annually in stable, voter-approved funding. This is not speculative—it's a direct hit to our operating budget.

Inside millage is not subject to rollback or renewal. It's a foundational part of our financial structure, allowing us to maintain programs, retain staff, and provide essential services without constantly returning to voters. Eliminating it would force us to make painful cuts or seek new levies, placing even more pressure on our community.

**Data provided by the Ohio Education Policy Institute and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators*

The Oregon City School District adheres to Title VI, Title IX, ADA, and Section 504; thus, does not discriminate in educational programs and employment practices on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap.



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If HB 335 is approved, Oregon City Schools will be forced to make significant reductions in student learning opportunities. Career-tech programs, electives, academic intervention services, and extracurricular experiences will be scaled back or eliminated. These are not luxuries—they are vital pathways that prepare students for college, careers, and civic life.

In addition, district services that support both students and parents—such as counseling, transportation, and family engagement—will be reduced. Staffing levels will decline, leading to larger class sizes and fewer support personnel. These cuts will not only diminish the quality of education but also place additional strain on our local economy, where schools are major employers and community anchors.

Property Taxes vs. Income Taxes

Property taxes have long been a cornerstone of school funding. Reducing or eliminating them without a sustainable alternative would likely force a shift to income taxes—placing a heavier burden on working families. Unlike property taxes, which are based on home value, income taxes are tied to earnings, disproportionately impacting those who can least afford it.

Reform Must Be Fair and Thoughtful

We agree that tax relief is important. But it must be balanced with the need to maintain strong schools, safe neighborhoods, and dependable local services. Achieving that balance requires shared responsibility among families, businesses, local governments, and the state.

Questions for Consideration

- What is the cumulative financial impact of HB 186 and HB 335 on Ohio's public schools and municipalities?
- What revenue sources will replace the funding lost from reduced property taxes and inside millage?
- How will our schools, police, fire departments, and municipalities be supported moving forward?

Let's work together to build a fairer system—one that supports families without compromising the quality of education that makes Oregon City and Jerusalem Township exceptional places to live and learn.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Dr. Jim Fritz Superintendent, Oregon City Schools