



Interested Party Testimony – HB 96  
Senate Education Committee  
May 6, 2025  
Presented by Susan Kaeser, LWVO Issue Specialist

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, my name is Susie Kaeser. I appreciate the opportunity to share on behalf of the LWVO, my thoughts about the urgency of funding public education in a way that is fair to communities, taxpayers and children so that all students attend schools with adequate resources for a high quality public education.

I live in Cleveland Heights. This first ring suburb of Cleveland was incorporated as a village in 1902. The 1,500 voters immediately funded a public school – a reflection of the national commitment to the value of public education. There is still a school on that site and I have been a classroom volunteer there for the last 37 years.

Your approach to public school funding matters immensely to the residents of Ohio, to the people who elected you, to our quality of life and economic prosperity, and Ohio's reputation and identity.

Do we want to be known as the state that is loose and free with its public funds for unaccountable education providers, but stingy with the schools that are open to all, found in every community, are a vehicle for equality, and are the pillars of democracy – our public schools?

Your budget decisions tell us a lot about you and what you care about.

If you support the Ohio Constitution, cherish democracy, and believe voters need a K-12 education that prepares them for informed self-governance, then the budget you propose should make public education your priority.

If you have ever experienced a joyful, empowering moment because you mastered a new skill, solved a difficult problem, or completed a project that seemed way beyond your capacity, then you should find the resources to adequately fund public education so that every student in Ohio can have that experience.

If you believe that developing the full potential in every student is humane, profound, a benefit to that person and all of us, then you should provide stable and predictable funding so schools can establish programs that respond to our children and their needs.

If you value equality then you should adopt a school funding formula that makes equality of opportunity possible for 1.5 million children in 609 school districts and all 88 counties. The Fair School Funding formula levels the playing field so that no matter where you live in our diverse state, or whatever the needs of students there are sufficient resources for a high quality education. Don't delay any longer.

If you believe K-12 education helps develop the foundation for a motivated and qualified work force that can adapt to an every-changing economy and skill requirements, then you should invest state resources in schools that are driven by educational standards not religion.

If you respect the school funding partnership between the legislature and local communities, and believe that partners should pull their weight and keep their promises, then adopt a funding solution that increases the state share and decreases reliance on property taxes.

If you believe every community should have the chance to thrive, retain and attract residents including those on fixed incomes, and offer a comfortable quality of life, then invest in the public schools that are a center of community life, an essential resource, and an economic driver.

If you treasure religious freedom, then you will support a strong system of nonsectarian public schools.

If you want to be a responsible steward of public funds, then state dollars should only be expended in schools that are accountable to the public, held to high standards, transparent in their decisions, and can be audited – public schools.

If you agree that school boards and treasurers must act in the best interest of the community, then don't handicap their efforts by mandating the return of locally raised funds.

**Voters elected you to make Ohio a good place to live, work and prosper. A strong system of public education, adequately funded and by the legislature and fairly distributed to ensure equal opportunity, is a centerpiece of that aspiration.**

Adopt and fund the Fair School Funding plan.