



Worthington Schools
200 E. Wilson Bridge Road
Worthington, Ohio 43085
www.worthington.k12.oh.us

Senate Education Committee
House Bill 96
May 7, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is TJ Cusick and I serve as the Treasurer for Worthington Schools in Franklin County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill (HB) 96, the biennial budget. I appreciate the time and effort put forth by members of the House, listening to our concerns and drafting changes to the initial budget proposal. Growing successful districts like Worthington should not lose funding, and we appreciate that acknowledgment. However, completely abandoning the existing formula is not the answer, and like many of my colleagues I urge you to fully fund the existing formula. Once we have a fully implemented, working formula, adjustments can be made in future budgets, but we need a strong foundation to start with.

Respectful of your time, I want to express my concerns regarding the House's proposed limitation on cash balance carryover, as well as offer alternatives for consideration:

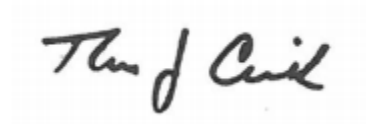
- Worthington's cash balance at the end of fiscal year 2024 was 74% of that year's expenditures and was the result of voter-approved funding in 2022, not inflationary growth.
- As a non-floor district, we historically have managed our levy cycles with the motto of "reasonable levies at reasonable intervals." Through careful financial planning and better than expected results, we should be able to stretch our current levy cycle from 2026 to 2028
- School districts are different than municipalities and the state – our future revenue is mostly flat, unlike sales and income taxes which grow over time. Our cash balance is a result of where we are in the levy cycle, not excessive hoarding.
- A cash balance limit would revert us right back to the ballot sooner, likely in 2026 rather than 2028, and cause confusion, not relief, for taxpayers
- Levy passage rates are low. Forcing districts to return to voters more often, with little runway for failure, will almost certainly damage student support and outcomes.

I encourage you to eliminate the provision limiting carryover cash balance and allow locally elected boards of education, with support of local voters and existing oversight provided by local county budget commissions, to plan and control their financial future and avoid the catastrophic, likely unintended outcome of this provision. Rather, consider the recommendations from the Joint Committee on Property Tax Reform, and work with our associations to find prospective solutions, not retrospective punishment.

As an alternative solution, consider amending ORC 5705.212 (and a few other related sections) to provide greater flexibility regarding incremental levies. The current statute limits districts to five increments, requires all increments to be uniform after the first, and to determine the increments at the time of the vote, when property values aren't even fully known yet. The biggest hindrance is that

districts cannot combine an incremental levy with a bond issue on one vote, leading many districts to choose the traditional approach to manage ballot frequency. Providing flexible options for residents to incrementally fund their schools, matching revenue with expenses as needed rather than prepaying, lowers the need for cash balances and provides stability and predictability for the taxpayer, the school district, and at the center of it all, consistency for the student.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "TJ Cusick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "T" and "J" are connected, and the "Cusick" is written in a similar cursive script. The signature is centered horizontally within the block.

TJ Cusick, CPA

Treasurer, Worthington City Schools