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Senate Education Committee
House Bill 96

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today on House Bill 96. We appreciate the work of this committee and the General Assembly in supporting Ohio's public schools.

As the Superintendent and Treasurer of South Euclid-Lyndhurst City Schools in Cuyahoga County, we respectfully write to you with serious concerns regarding the recent proposal of House Bill 96. Over the past several weeks, we have been closely monitoring the developments of this bill, and we want to address the potential impact it could have on our district and its financial stability.

Key Provisions of Concern:

- **30% Carryover Cap:** This provision would limit school districts like ours to carry over no more than 30% of our annual operating budget into the next fiscal year. This "savings" is essential for districts to weather fluctuations in funding, maintain program stability, and avoid costly mid-cycle levies. It's a necessary tool for maintaining financial health, ensuring smooth operations, and protecting taxpayers from repeated requests for funding. This cap undermines years of careful fiscal planning and would force us to return to the ballot much sooner than anticipated.

County Budget Commission Authority: Another alarming aspect of this bill grants county budget commissions the power to reduce property tax collections—even on voter-approved levies—without a public vote or community input. This provision would weaken the voice of the electorate and allow local political entities to unilaterally alter the financial framework on which school districts rely.

Why Should This Matter to You?

At South Euclid-Lyndhurst, we have worked diligently to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. We aim to minimize our reliance on new tax levies by carefully managing our resources and planning for the long-term. By maintaining a reasonable reserve, we ensure financial stability and preserve essential educational services.

Under House Bill 96, however, this prudent financial planning would be penalized. The bill assumes that districts with more than 30% of their annual expenses saved are "hoarding" funds, which could not be further from the truth. Instead of rewarding fiscal responsibility, the bill imposes restrictions that will force districts like ours to seek new funding sources more frequently, thus creating a cycle of uncertainty and disruption in our communities. If HB96 passes in its current form, the power to adjust school funding would shift from local school boards and voters to county political bodies. This shift would result in less transparency, less public accountability, and, ultimately, greater political interference in public education. What might appear to be tax relief in the short term will likely lead to higher taxes and more frequent levies in the long run, destabilizing our schools and eroding public trust.

What Does This Mean for South Euclid-Lyndhurst?

In practical terms, HB96 would:

- Force our district to go to the ballot more often, disrupting long-term planning and stability.
 - Penalize us for being responsible in our budgeting and financial planning.
- Create uncertainty about our future financial stability.

- Put essential programs, services, and staffing at risk due to fluctuating and unpredictable funding.

What Can You Do?

We urge you to consider the broader implications of House Bill 96 for districts like ours. We are asking you to take the following steps:

- Reject House Bill 96 in its current form.
- Ensure that future legislation supports districts' ability to manage their finances responsibly without undue interference from county or state political entities.
- Protect local control over public education and preserve the trust placed in us by our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Dominick A. Kaple
Superintendent



Josh Hill
Treasurer