

Testimony for House Bill 96
Senate Education Committee
May 7, 2025
Amy K. Cissell, Anderson Township Resident

Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Bill Blessing, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and members of the Education committee of the Ohio Senate:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Amy K. Cissell.

I am a resident of Anderson Township and a parent of three young adults who all graduated from the Forest Hills School District. I was an active PTO and community volunteer while my children were students. My son graduated from Mount Saint Joseph in 2023, Summa Cum Laude, and is now a firefighter/EMT; my daughter just graduated from the University of Cincinnati, Summa Cum Laude, and is starting a job in supply chain on May 12; and my youngest just finished her first year at Ohio State. I would say that the Forest Hills School District had a great educational impact on all of them.

Therefore, I am testifying to support fully funding Ohio's public schools in the budget bill. I am concerned about the local burden that is placed on my community to support our amazing public school district.

Specifically as it relates to the Forest Hills School District, I am asking for the following:

- I. Eliminate the cap on savings
- II. Protect the Guarantee for districts like Forest Hills School District
- III. Fully phase in the Fair School Funding Plan

As a near empty-nester I could downsize and move back into Cincinnati where I grew up and where taxes are lower. However, I choose to stay in my neighborhood because Anderson Township is a great place to raise a family and, because of this, I have wonderful neighbors and friends. My experience volunteering for PTO, Boosters, After Prom, Little League, and athletic teams allowed my children and me to become close with other families, teachers, and coaches. When my husband died suddenly five years ago, the amount of support from the community members we have met through our ties with the school district was unbelievable. Teachers from the elementary, middle, and high school came to the visitation; the high school soccer coaches came; and our elementary school principal came. Our lives were forever enriched by the people we met along the way in the township and in the district.

My family doesn't personally require the use of the Forest Hills School District anymore for educational purposes. However, my neighbors' young children deserve to have the same educational experience that my children did: access to athletics and busing, to art and music programs, to gifted programs, and to enrichment classes. I also feel it is important to keep our outstanding teachers and staff so that incoming students can receive the same level of education and feeling of community that my children did. Furthermore, I am a proud product of the Cincinnati Public School District and I believe in public schools.

Again, I ask you to please consider families like my neighbors' and mine when you consider the public education budget and, specifically, that you fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan. Our community can't continue to shoulder such a high tax burden. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to submit my testimony.