

Honorable Chair Brenner  
Ranking Member Ingram  
and Members of the Senate Education Committee

### **Testimony on Am. Sub. H. B. No. 96: Fair School Funding Formula**

My name is Kathryn Garvey. I served eight years on the Chagrin Falls Board of Education and received an MBA from Case Western Reserve University. As a former school board member, and someone who has a working knowledge of school finance, I want to speak with you today about respecting the integrity of the Fair School Funding Formula. To ask you to commit to budgeting for the State's fair share of what it costs to educate 90% of Ohio's students.

Members of this committee are in the unique position to intimately understand all of the costs that go into educating a child in a public school – from teachers, to transportation, to special education. You understand the need to incorporate true costs, today's costs, when figuring out how much is spent per pupil every year. After all, you are funding the future of education in Ohio, not the past. You also understand that fairness in funding must consider each community's capacity to raise funds locally in calculating the State's fair share and the local community's fair share.

Everything I just described, all the research and careful analysis, is what makes up the Fair School Funding Plan. I urge you and your colleagues to continue to rely on the Fair School Funding Plan in the biennial budget and not set it aside for temporary calculations because of sticker shock.

The Fair School Funding Plan is the fairest, most accurate constitutional funding formula the State of Ohio has ever had, and when the math is done right, it calculates the true cost to educate a child in Ohio.

It's not partisan, and it is not anecdotal. A bipartisan group of lawmakers worked with experts to develop the Formula. School treasurers, superintendents, and school board members have testified before this committee that fully funding the Formula with current data will result in a fair and appropriate allocation of State and local dollars for public education.

The State budget reflects Ohio's priorities. Ohioans will tell you that funding public education for the 90% of our kids who attend public schools should be your top priority. In fact, funding a system of public schools is the only funding mandate that the legislature has, and it's in the Ohio Constitution.

And yet, House Republicans have chosen to not cover the State's fair share of the true costs to educate Ohio's public school students. By fair share, I mean the calculated amount from the Fair School Funding Plan that everyone in the last two General Assemblies agreed was fair and equitable. Instead, the House budget proposes to give

each district a little more than last year. Now, a cynic might say this is so that House Republicans can claim they are giving schools more and more each year. But the reality is that a 2% increase will not even cover inflation, so it is actually giving schools less money. This leaves local property owners to pay the local share, plus make up the difference that the State won't pay.

Ohioans know that when the State chooses to pay less, local property owners have to pay more.

Ohioans want fairness. We are willing to pay our fair share, and we expect the state to pay its fair share. We know that when the State pays its fair share, that is REAL property tax relief.

I am here today to ask you to trust the Fair School Funding Formula. Don't nullify it just because of sticker shock.

I get sticker shock from the high cost of groceries, but I pay what I have to for healthy food so my kids can grow and thrive. Your constituents – the families of the vast majority of Ohio kids who attend public schools – are telling you that public education should be the top priority for Ohio, and that it is worth the investment.

As you attempt to balance the budget, don't manipulate the Formula. Update the inputs so they are accurate and current. Trust the math. If the result is something you choose not to fund, then consider extending the phase-in over the next 3 to 4 years instead of the next 2. This allows you to gradually meet your commitment to your constituents and allows schools to plan accordingly.

No doubt, Ohioans will be disappointed by any delay, but they will appreciate the transparency and the intent to move toward a future State budget that acknowledges the State share of the real costs to educate Ohio's kids.