



Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Blessing, Ranking Minority Member Ingram, and Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee:

My name is Jeanne Melvin, and I am a retired public-school teacher and president of Public Education Partners, a volunteer advocacy group for public school districts and the children and families that they serve. Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit this written testimony to the Senate Education Committee concerning Sub. HB 96.

There's not enough time to address all the egregious issues in HB 96, a 5000+ page budget document that limits public school districts from carrying over more than 30% of reserve funds from the previous fiscal year in their operating budgets, reduces public library funding, awards more of our taxpayer dollars for private/parochial school vouchers and for unaccountable non-public, non-chartered schools in the amount of \$2.4 billion, dismantles the Fair School Funding Plan, eliminates all of the elected State School Board positions, and more...

Let's focus today on the unnecessary expansion of school vouchers, the dismantling of the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP), and the destruction of the State Board of Education.

In 1997, the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled that the state funding system "fails to provide for a thorough and efficient system of common schools" as required by the Ohio Constitution and directed the state to find a remedy. Instead of creating a system that is no longer overly reliant on the passage of local operating millage, our state leadership continues to expand private and parochial school options.

Last year, the state of Ohio was \$740 million short on the Fair School Funding Plan. School voucher funding accounted for \$742 million out of the same pot of taxpayer funds the Fair School Funding Plan came from.

If it weren't for school vouchers, Ohio could've had a fully funded Fair School Funding Plan last year!

By design, charters and vouchers divert state funding out of school district budgets and force voters to replace this funding with additional local operating levies. "School choice" distractions have been the major hindrance to the development of a thorough and efficient system of common schools as required by the Ohio Constitution.

In this budget, please be satisfied with the school privatization policies already put into place in the Buckeye State, and put the brakes school voucher expansion.

Several years ago, Representative Robert Cupp and Representative John Patterson convened a statewide bipartisan workgroup, including eight practicing school district CFO/Treasurers and eight practicing Superintendents (the “Cupp-Patterson Workgroup”), to devise a new school funding formula. The workgroup spent over three years determining the inputs necessary to fund a “thorough and efficient system of common schools” that reduces the over-reliance on local property tax and creates equity in the state foundation system.

The Cupp-Patterson Workgroup analyzed national research, best practices, actual Ohio school district spending data, and drew on their own extensive experience in educating students and operating school districts to make recommendations for a school funding system that meets the needs of all Ohio’s students in the 21st century.

The Cupp/Patterson Fair School Funding Plan was made in Ohio by Ohioans, unlike many bills that are sent to the Statehouse by out-of-state interests.

Remember, esteemed Senators: Funding public education fairly is one of your primary constitutional responsibilities.

Please reinstate the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP), as it was written by the Cupp-Patterson team of education finance experts, to ensure that no student or public school is disadvantaged because of income level or location.

Finally, many people don’t realize that buried in the Ohio House version of the two-year state budget is language that would ELIMINATE ALL 11 ELECTED STATE SCHOOL BOARD POSITIONS, and the other eight appointed members would be trimmed to five members to be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Ohio Senate.

What about the voice and expectations of the Ohio voters who voted for those eleven elected members? Eliminating 11 elected offices with a budget amendment is a direct assault on the people’s voice.

Please remove the language from Sub. HB 96 that removes the elected members from Ohio’s State Board of Education.

Thank you for your service.

Jeanne Melvin and the Board of

Public Education Partners