

Testimony of Anisa Liban
Vice President, Westerville City Schools Board of Education
Senate Education Committee – Opposition to H.B. 96
May 7, 2025 | 4PM

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Anisa Liban. I'm a mother of three children who attend our local public schools, and I serve as vice president of the Westerville City Schools board of education. I am an Ohio mom who is always thinking about the future of this district. I stand before you today concerned about that future.

Yesterday, I visited one of our elementary schools and had a conversation with the school nurse, who shared how additional funding could help improve access to care and resources for our families. Whether it's providing transportation, educational materials, or extra support for families, our district needs this funding to meet the full range of our students' needs.

If HB96 passes, our district is projected to lose \$110 million. That's not a number we can absorb without major consequences. It would force us to make deep, painful cuts to staff, academic programs, and essential services. And the frustrating part is—it wouldn't be because we've mismanaged money. It's because we've planned responsibly.

This bill punishes districts like Westerville, who have made careful financial decisions and built a reserve not out of luxury, but out of necessity. That reserve is what allows us to operate sustainably and protect students when funding falls short.

One area that will be severely impacted by these cuts is **health services**, including mental health support and essential programs that help students thrive both inside and outside the classroom. If HB96 passes, we will have to make difficult decisions, including cutting back on services that support students' physical and mental well-being. These reductions would leave us unable to provide students with the holistic support they need to succeed.

One of the first places we'd be forced to cut is transportation. If this bill passes, we may only be able to provide busing for high school students attending their assigned neighborhood schools. That means many younger students—or those attending special programs—could lose access to transportation. For many families, this creates a serious barrier to learning. Because if a child can't get to school, they can't learn. It's that simple.

And beyond busing, this bill would push us to cut back to the bare minimum. That means fewer counselors, fewer reading supports, fewer enrichment and arts opportunities. These aren't extras—they are what help students grow, connect, and succeed.

HB96 sends the wrong message. It punishes long-term planning and removes the only financial cushion we have left. It puts our children's education—and their futures—at risk.

Instead of moving forward with this bill, I respectfully ask this committee to:

Keep the Fair School Funding Plan in place, update the cost inputs to reflect inflation,
And stabilize the state share of funding, so that it matches the real needs in our classrooms.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Ohio's students. I urge you to stand with us—and with the future of public education. Please do not pass S.B. 96 as it is and take into consideration the feedback provided by our district and many others across this great state.