

**Testimony for House Bill 96  
Senate Education Committee**

May 6, 2025

Erin Walczewski, Anderson Township Resident

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

My name is Erin Walczewski, I'm a resident of Anderson Township and the parent of two terrific kids in the Forest Hills School District. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony about this bill.

As a parent, as an educator, and as a product of public schools myself, I'm a big believer in public schools, and I know that they need sufficient funding to provide the high-quality education that every kid in our community deserves. School districts already face challenges across the board, and I'm asking for you to support measures that will give them the resources they need to educate our kids. High-quality public schools benefit *all* of us—including people without kids, people whose children are grown, and people who send their kids to private school. Strong public schools create strong communities, for *everyone*. As a candidate for the school board for this fall's election, I can't even count how many conversations I've had with friends and neighbors in the area who are concerned about school funding and what this means for our kids, for our community, and for our local economy.

**Eliminate the cap on savings funds.** I'm opposed to the cap on savings for public school districts because it hampers their ability to exercise good fiscal practices. We're trying to teach our kids the importance of financial literacy, and one of the first lessons is to save for unexpected expenses. Here, where the taxpayers have approved the money for the school's use and the school board has determined that a strategic reserve of funds for future expenses is the most prudent use of the money, it feels counterproductive to impose an arbitrary cap on those savings funds.

**Protect the Guarantee for Forest Hills School District.** Our schools need funding to operate, and the less guesswork there is regarding funding fluctuations and related uncertainties, the more our leaders are able to make strategic choices that benefit our whole community.

**Fully phase in the Fair School Funding Plan.** This plan gives school districts the best opportunity to leverage public money for public schools, which benefits our entire community and our entire state.

Like so many other families, we moved here for the schools. My kids—and so many other kids—are thriving in school because of their relationships with their teachers, the strength of the curricular offerings, and their absolute love of sports and music programs that light up their eyes and get them excited about learning in all sorts of ways. Without adequate funding, our kids would shift from thriving to “getting by.” That's not good for them and it's not good for Ohio. People will not keep moving to Ohio for the schools if the schools are “getting by.” We need an educated electorate and a strong workforce to attract people here and give people a reason to stay and flourish.

Thank you for your service as elected officials and for all you do for your constituents. Please vote to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan.

Sincerely,

Erin Walczewski