

Senate Education Committee
House Bill 96
Kevin Dalton, President of the Toledo Federation of Teachers
Interested Party Testimony
May 6, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 96. I am Kevin Dalton, a first-grade teacher currently serving as President of the Toledo Federation of Teachers (TFT). TFT represents approximately 2400 teachers and paraprofessionals at Toledo Public Schools.

Our union has always been focused on instructional integrity and has been innovative in its approach to ensuring that high quality teachers are in every classroom and that all teachers have access to high quality, teacher-led professional development.

I appreciate this committee's efforts to support Ohio's public schools, and I respectfully submit the following comments on several provisions in House Bill 96.

Fair School Funding Plan: Preserve the Phase-In and Update Base Cost Inputs

I am here today to urge the Committee to remain committed to the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) by funding the last two years of the six-year phase-in with updated costs, including the additional costs of educating students with disabilities and students who are economically disadvantaged. The formula is a student-centered, transparent, and predictable model that reflects the actual cost of educating students in our communities.

Toledo Public Schools (TPS) educates over 20,900 students. Of those, 22.3% are students with disabilities and 93.8% are economically disadvantaged. The Fair School Funding Formula recognizes the increased needs of these students and calculates them into the formula.

In addition, the Fair School Funding Formula provides stable, predictable funding which allows us to plan for the priorities that we know will benefit our students, such as strengthening our pre-K programs to give students a solid start on their education and, on the other end of the education spectrum, broadening our career-tech and workforce development programming to expand upon the great opportunities that we already provide through our career tech magnet schools.

Expansion of Vouchers

TFT is opposed to increasing the amount of money for EdChoice vouchers, allowing families to receive multiple vouchers, and expanding vouchers through Education Savings Accounts. Approximately 90% of Ohio students attend a public school, yet Ohio is still not meeting its constitutional responsibility to adequately fund them. Districts like Toledo educate students with a wide variety of needs. We cannot turn away students – nor would we want to! We do the best we can with the resources we have to meet the needs of every student, and we are held to high accountability standards.

While our schools are still not being fully funded, approximately one billion dollars has already been given out in private school vouchers. These private schools can be selective in who they admit as students, and they are not held to the same accountability standards. We are particularly concerned about education savings accounts that can be used for nearly any expense and have huge potential for waste or fraud because of the lack of accountability attached to them. We strongly urge you to reject them.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

We also oppose the provision in the House budget that allows superintendents to ignore collective bargaining agreements when making decisions about educators' teaching assignments. Collective bargaining agreements are the negotiated decisions that both union members and administrators have determined will create the best learning environment for the students while attracting and retaining the best educators. TFT has a long history of mentoring and is known globally for its peer assistance and review program. We strive to put a high-quality teacher in front of every student. The false assumption behind this proposed language is that our neediest students are getting lower quality teachers. That is simply not true and is a slap in the face to the teachers who often face the toughest challenges. Our profession is already facing a crisis in attracting and retaining teachers, and two of the reasons stated by teachers is the lack of respect that they are given as professionals and the lack of autonomy. Stripping teachers of their collective bargaining rights is the same as stripping away both respect and autonomy. The proposed language will do nothing to improve student outcomes but will lead to teachers leaving a district or even leaving the profession.

Chair Brenner and committee members, thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.