

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a retired public-school teacher and a lifelong resident of the Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District. Three generations of my family have attended public schools in this district, and I dedicated my entire professional career to teaching here. As someone deeply rooted in and committed to Ohio’s public education system, I am writing to express my serious concerns about the House version of the biennial budget—and to urge you to act in support of Ohio’s public schoolchildren.

You’ve undoubtedly heard from many constituents in the CH-UH district, and I hope their voices, along with mine, underscore the passion and commitment our community has for fair and sustainable public-school funding. The issues at stake in this budget are critical—not just for my district, but for the 90% of Ohio’s children who are educated in public schools.

1. Fully Fund the Fair School Funding Plan

The bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan, developed over years of research and collaboration, must be fully implemented using up-to-date cost data. This plan is not a luxury—it is a necessity to correct over two decades of unconstitutional school funding in Ohio. It is based on the actual needs of students in each district and represents a fair, transparent, and effective solution. Scaling back this plan, as the House budget does, would leave public schools \$2.75 billion short over the next two years, pushing the burden onto local communities already struggling to keep up. We cannot afford to go backward. Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan.

2. Reign in the Unchecked Growth of Vouchers

At a time when public schools are underfunded, Ohio continues to expand voucher programs that drain public funds for private benefit. Last year alone, over \$1 billion was diverted to subsidize families—many of them wealthy—who had already opted out of the public system. This is not targeted assistance; it is a giveaway. Funding unaccountable private education at the expense of public schools is fiscally irresponsible and morally wrong. It violates the constitutional obligation to secure a “thorough and efficient system of common schools.” Eliminate or seriously reform these wasteful voucher programs.

3. Preserve Democratic Oversight of Public Education

The proposal to eliminate Ohio’s elected State Board of Education members in favor of five political appointees—many with ties to private and parochial interests—is a blatant attack on democratic governance and a likely violation of the Ohio Constitution. Voters will not forget this erosion of their voice in public education. Reverse this dangerous overreach.

4. Respect Sound Financial Planning by School Districts

The budget proposal penalizing districts for having more than a 30% cash carryover is ill-informed. School budgets, like personal finances, require responsible long-term planning. It is entirely appropriate—and often necessary—for districts to accumulate larger reserves early in levy cycles to prepare for future costs. Eliminating this provision will prevent responsible financial management and punish districts for acting prudently.

I understand that not all members of this committee are ardent supporters of public education. But the facts are clear: Ohio's public schools serve 1.5 million students, and most families are satisfied with the education their children receive. In many rural and suburban communities, public schools are not only educational institutions, they are the heart of the community.

You now face a choice: Support the children, families, and communities who rely on public schools, or side with special interests that seek to dismantle them. I urge you to put the future of Ohio's children first by fixing the serious flaws in the House budget.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Sincerely,

Ari Klein

Retired Educator

Cleveland Heights–University Heights City School District Resident