



Columbus City Schools

Dr. Angela Chapman, Superintendent/CEO

Ryan Cook, Treasurer/CFO

Maurice Woods, Chief Operations Officer

270 E. State Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Mission: Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

Senate Education Committee

Amended House Bill 96

May 14, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 96.

My name is Dr. Angela Chapman, and I serve as Superintendent and CEO of Columbus City Schools. I'm joined today by our Treasurer and CFO, Ryan Cook, and Chief Operations Officer, Maurice Woods. We're here to speak about the educational needs of students in Ohio's largest school district, specifically in the areas of school funding and student transportation.

Columbus City Schools serves more than 47,000 students. That includes over 8,000 students with disabilities and nearly 11,000 English learners, meaning one in five students in our district is learning English. Our students come from 113 different countries. Our enrollment has grown by 2,000 students this year alone, creating greater demand for teachers, resources, and support services.

As an educator with over 25 years of experience, I know firsthand how a high-quality public education transforms lives. At CCS, we've expanded early childhood education, implemented training in the science of reading, and adopted a strong literacy curriculum—before it became a statewide requirement. We're now committed to empowering our classrooms with top-tier math instruction, driving meaningful improvements in student outcomes.

We are also focused on preparing students for college and careers. The CCS Career Technical Planning District earned 4.5 stars on the state report card, with a 96% graduation rate and 97% post-program outcomes. We've launched major efforts like the



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Columbus Promise, which expands access to college, and we're rolling out Career Academies—small learning communities focused on high-demand fields like healthcare, logistics, and technology.

But this progress is at risk without sustainable state funding. Our community supports our work—we were among the few districts to pass a levy last year. But local funding alone is not enough. Without a stable state foundation, we may be forced to reduce services, delay improvements, or turn back to local taxpayers too soon.

Nonetheless, our unwavering priority is to educate and support every student and family in Columbus. Every decision our team makes is guided by what is best for our students.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I now invite our Treasurer and CFO, Ryan Cook, to provide more details on the Governor's and House proposals for school funding.



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We appreciate that Governor DeWine's executive budget includes the final two years of the phase-in for the Fair School Funding Plan; however, the full phase-in alone isn't enough. For the formula to be effective, its base cost inputs must be regularly updated to reflect current economic realities. Without these updates, the formula becomes outdated and shifts more financial responsibility to local taxpayers. This plan was built on the principle that state support should reflect the actual cost of running schools. Freezing these inputs undermines the formula's integrity and puts additional pressure on large urban districts like Columbus, where student needs are increasing and complex.

For example, Columbus City Schools currently receives a 20% state share. Under the Governor's proposal, that would drop to the 10% minimum, treating our community as if it had the same wealth as Ohio's most affluent suburbs. These communities often serve fewer high-need students and have far greater local resources. This adjustment would result in CCS losing over \$45 million over the next two years and threaten essential services and support for our students.

We are also concerned about the House's approach. While we appreciate that the House added more in terms of resources, its version falls short. Most concerning is the essential elimination of the Fair School Funding Plan while simultaneously capping district carryover balances to 30 percent of the prior year's expenditures.

The House version replaces the formula's intended phase-in with a temporary "bridge formula," prohibiting the use of the statutory Fair School Funding Plan and effectively sidelining the formula that moves towards full implementation. This change undermines the predictability and transparency that the formula was designed to achieve. Again, if



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we do not use updated base cost inputs and continue the phase-in of the plan, the formula's state share calculation becomes distorted, misrepresenting both district capacity and student need.

The House proposes capping districts' cash balances as a way to provide property tax relief. While we support relief for those who truly need it, especially seniors on fixed incomes, this approach is misguided. Columbus City Schools has long maintained responsible reserves, generally below the proposed cap and only exceeding it briefly after voters approve a levy (see Table 1). These reserves are essential for managing inflation and ensuring financial stability over our levy cycle.

Penalizing districts for prudent financial planning risks compromising services that students rely on every day. We urge the Senate to reject this provision and consider more effective, targeted ways to deliver meaningful property tax relief.

As you continue your deliberations, we respectfully ask that the Senate remain committed to the Fair School Funding Plan. If full phase-in is not immediately feasible, we strongly urge adoption of the most current base cost inputs. Without them, the formula fails to meet its purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. CCS Chief Operations Officer Maurice Woods will now address student transportation.

Table 1 CCS Cash Balance as Percent of Expense

Fiscal Year	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Cash balance as percent of expenditures	46.4%	26.4%	27.7%	28.2%	31.8%



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My name is Maurice Woods, and I serve as the Chief Operations Officer for Columbus City Schools. It's been a privilege to join Dr. Chapman's leadership team this past year after spending eight years at Broward County Public Schools in Florida as the Strategy and Operations Officer. I appreciate Chair Brenner for including me in conversations and interested party meetings focused on improving student transportation across Ohio.

To give you a sense of the scale: this year, CCS routed transportation for nearly 38,000 students daily, across 233 schools. That includes 9,440 students attending 114 charter and nonpublic schools. We operate 475 CCS-owned bus routes, 105 outsourced bus routes, and more than 80 van routes supporting special education.

Shortly after I joined CCS last summer, our transportation services drew public attention when approximately 1,500 students attending charter or nonpublic schools learned they would not receive transportation. This was due to students being ineligible for transportation because drive times exceeded 30 minutes or transportation for the students being deemed impractical—both of which are permitted under Ohio law. While the district complied with state law, we recognized that our communication with families and schools was inadequate and needed to be better. Superintendent Chapman took swift action to improve transparency and coordination.

The CCS transportation team has increased engagement with charter and nonpublic schools to improve partnership and efficiency. This year, of the 187 charter and nonpublic schools invited, 81 participated in planning meetings—up from 59 last year. We've expanded Q&A sessions, shared more detailed information, and recorded sessions for those unable to attend.



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Despite these improvements, the biggest challenge we face remains staffing. Before COVID, CCS had 771 active drivers for 706 routes (note the excess of drivers over routes). Today, we have just 435 drivers to cover 475 routes. This should not be surprising, given that a recent Ohio School Boards Association survey found 93% of districts are experiencing a bus driver shortage. The requirements haven't changed, but the scope of work has changed, and our workforce has been cut nearly in half.

We appreciate that the House budget proposes a school transportation workgroup, and we strongly support including CCS. We also support the Senate's efforts to explore alternative transportation models, the possibility of partnering with cross-industry logistics experts, and considering a county-wide pilot program.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We are happy to answer any questions.