

**Written Testimony of Aaron Sable  
Superintendent, Medina City Schools  
Ohio Senate Education Committee**

**May 14, 2025**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding House Bill 96 and its implications for public education in Ohio. My name is Aaron Sable, and I have served as Superintendent of Medina City Schools for the past 9 years, a district serving over 6,500 students in northeast Ohio.

I write today to express strong concerns about specific provisions within the bill—most notably, the proposed **30% cap on district carryover balances**—and to advocate for a more thoughtful, equitable approach to school funding in our state.

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**Medina City Schools: Our Story and the Impact of the Proposed 30% Cap**

The proposed carryover cap would immediately strip Medina City Schools of over **\$13 million in the first year alone**, nearly the entire amount generated by the **7.5-mill emergency operating levy** that our community passed just last November. That levy was not a luxury—it was a lifeline. Years of flat state funding and inflation left us in fiscal caution with both the Ohio Auditor of State and the Department of Education and Workforce. The only path forward after closing two elementary buildings and implementing \$4 million in reductions was through local voter support.

The successful passage of that levy not only brought us out of fiscal caution, but it restored stability and allowed us to build a multi-year plan to support academic programs, mental health services, and student opportunities. This was more than a funding decision—it was a resounding vote of confidence from our community.

If the 30% cap is enacted, that hard-earned stability will vanish. Medina will be forced back into deficit spending and at risk of re-entering fiscal caution. Even worse, we would likely have to return to the ballot with a request for **higher millage** just to maintain existing services—something our residents already voted to protect.

This proposal penalizes communities that did the right thing. It punishes responsible fiscal planning and undermines public trust. Our story is not unique—but it is a clear example of how this policy would cause real and immediate harm.

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## Wider Budget Concerns

In addition to the carryover cap, there are several broader issues in House Bill 96 that raise concern:

- The bill **eliminates the Fair School Funding Formula**, a bipartisan and research-based model designed to provide equity and predictability. No replacement has been proposed, creating long-term instability across all districts .
- The bill allocates **\$500 million to expand the state voucher program**, which serves 10% of students, while investing only \$250 million in public schools that educate the other 90% . This misalignment threatens the quality of education available to most Ohio students.
- The proposed **short-term property tax relief** will lead to **higher long-term costs** for local taxpayers due to increased levy reliance. It fails to recognize that the local tax burden has already shifted heavily onto homeowners due to reductions in the commercial tax base over the past two decades .

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## Balancing Flexibility and Accountability in Budget Planning: Recommendations from The Alliance for High Quality Education

I respectfully urge the committee to consider the thoughtful recommendations offered by **The Alliance for High Quality Education**, of which Medina City Schools is a member. Their position outlines a more reasonable and flexible approach to managing district carryover balances, one that protects both fiscal responsibility and local control.

At a minimum, they recommend that any carryover-related policy should:

- **Exclude districts projected to deficit spend** within the first three years of their forecast. Penalizing already-struggling districts only accelerates the financial crisis.
- Allow districts with **unencumbered funds** that meet multi-year fiscal obligations to **justify those balances** during annual budget reviews with local tax commissions.
- Grant **budget commissions the authority—but not the mandate—to adjust carryover percentages** if a district's reserves exceed a reasonable threshold, provided such action does not place the district in fiscal caution or conflict with its obligations under Ohio law.

These are common-sense safeguards that acknowledge the realities of local levy cycles, enrollment trends, inflation, and financial uncertainty. Uniform caps ignore the complexity of school finance and risk destabilizing well-managed districts.

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## Conclusion and Request

Ohio's public schools need a funding framework that is **equitable, sustainable, and responsive to local realities**. Unfortunately, House Bill 96—as currently written—undermines that goal by penalizing responsible fiscal planning, destabilizing local budgets, and diminishing public trust.

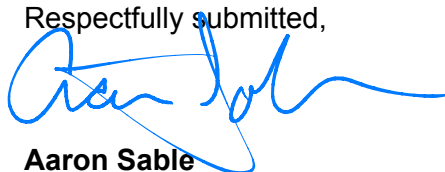
On behalf of Medina City Schools, I respectfully request that this committee consider the following actions:

1. **Remove the 30% carryover cap**, which threatens to destabilize fiscally responsible districts and overturn the decisions of local voters who have supported school levies in good faith.
2. **Restore or replace the Fair School Funding Formula** with a long-term, research-based model that ensures predictability, fairness, and equity for all districts across Ohio.
3. **Rebalance investment priorities** so that public schools—which serve more than 90% of Ohio's students—receive a proportionate and sustainable share of education funding.
4. **Utilize and Expand Existing Oversight Systems** through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) and the Auditor of State (AOS). These agencies already oversee rigorous accountability processes when districts enter fiscal caution, watch, or emergency status. Rather than imposing arbitrary balance limits, these structures could be adapted to evaluate carryover thresholds on a **case-by-case basis**.
  - Districts exceeding proposed thresholds could enter a collaborative planning process with ODEW.
  - This plan would outline timelines, budget priorities, and earmarked spending for excess funds.
  - It would allow for appropriate oversight while preserving local control and avoiding unintended financial harm.

This approach builds on existing infrastructure, respects the complexity of school finance, and allows for thoughtful, data-informed decision-making. It strikes a necessary balance between legislative oversight and district autonomy—while keeping the focus where it belongs: on student success and community trust.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to Ohio's children and families.

Respectfully submitted,



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