

Testimony of Erynn Beaton, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Education Committee
Senator Andrew Brenner, Chair
May 12, 2025

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

My name is Erynn Beaton. I am a proud graduate of public schools, and the mother of two Columbus City School students – one in elementary and one in high school. I write in opposition to the current public school allocations in HB96 and ask this body to follow the Fair School Funding Plan.

My husband and I chose to send our children to public schools because public schools are the foundation of our democracy. Our society is incredibly segregated on the basis of class, race, ethnicity, and religion. Research shows that when given a choice, Americans choose to associate with people who are like them. However, our democracy depends upon our ability to respect the opinions and voices of those who are different than us. Our forefathers knew working across differences was fundamental to democracy, which is why they provided for the freedom of speech and mandated the separation of church and state in our constitution.

Attending public school enables students to interact with others both like and unlike them on a variety of dimensions, which is necessary for a functioning democratic government. These interactions teach tolerance, build cohesion, and improve open-mindedness. When a student becomes schoolmates with a student of another religion or race, they learn to tolerate the experiences and beliefs of that student. When a classroom is filled with students from a diversity of backgrounds, they learn to work together despite their differences, and they build lifelong relationships that contribute to a cohesive society. When diverse students engage in discussion, they become open-minded, learning to see another point of view. These are the skills that we need democratic citizens to learn.

Conversely, private and homeschooling separate students on the basis of their beliefs and demographics. These students are denied the opportunity to learn from another perspective and meet friends from different backgrounds. While parents have the right to make that decision for their children, taxpayers have no reason to fund those choices.

I urge you to follow the Fair School Funding Plan in order to give Ohio K-12 students the opportunity to be enriched by the diversity of our state and preserve our democracy.

Sincerely,
Erynn Beaton