

FY 2025-2026 Budget Testimony  
Senate Education Committee  
May 12, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony. My name is Stacie Novelli, and I live in Fairlawn Ohio. I am a proud graduate of Ohio's public schools and now a parent to a thriving third grader in our local public elementary school. I also serve as an active PTA volunteer. My firsthand experience with public education — both as a student and now as a parent — has only deepened my conviction that strong public schools are essential to our children's success and to the health of our communities. I am strongly urging the committee to fully phase the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget with updated cost inputs to reflect the actual needs of our schools.

As someone who has benefited from public education and now entrusts it with my child's learning, I know how transformative well-funded, well-supported schools can be. I believe public education is the cornerstone of democracy and a critical investment in Ohio's future. Approximately 90% of Ohio's students attend public schools. These institutions are vital for providing quality education, preparing youth to become informed citizens and contributing members of society. Anything less than fully funding public schools would jeopardize educational quality and deepen inequities across communities.

It is alarming that Ohio has already diverted \$1 billion in taxpayer money to private schools through the EdChoice voucher program, which lacks the transparency and accountability required of public schools. This undermines the purpose of public education — to serve all children, regardless of their circumstances. Instead of expanding an uncapped voucher program, Ohio legislators should prioritize fully funding public schools by including fully phasing the Fair School Funding Plan in the budget, ensuring every child in Ohio has access to quality education.

A strong public education system is also a cornerstone of a healthy economy. Public schools help develop a skilled workforce, support community stability, and attract businesses seeking educated talent. By investing in public education, we are investing not only in our children, but in the long-term success of our state.

I urge you to ensure that the third phase of the Fair School Funding Plan is included in the budget with updated inputs and that public education remains a top priority for our state. Our children — and Ohio's future — are depending on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stacie Novelli