

Written Testimony of the Medina City Schools Board of Education

Ohio Senate Education Committee

May 14, 2025

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

As elected representatives of the largest school district in Medina County serving 6,500 students and the second largest employer behind the Cleveland Clinic, Medina campus, in the city of Medina, and , we stand before you not just as a school board, but as stewards of our community's most sacred promise: that every child, regardless of zip code, deserves a thriving public school.

Today, we urge you to stop House Bill 96's 30% carryover cap, a policy that would betray local voters, destabilize sound budgeting, and widen Ohio's educational inequities.

1. Local Control Under Attack

- In November 2024, the community approved a 7.5-mill 10-year emergency levy, the first new operating levy in **11 years**, to rescue our schools from fiscal caution.
- Our community approved the levy after the board was forced to cut \$4 million in our budget through consolidating elementary schools and implementing staff reductions.
- The 30% cap **eliminates** \$13 million of our newly voter approved levy , effectively overturning the will of our community.

2. The Hidden Costs of "One-Size-Fits-All" Caps

School finances aren't simple. The proposed cap ignores:

- **Levy cycles:** Districts save carryover funds to extend time between levy requests. Medina's **\$13 million** loss would have us returning to the ballot sooner than expected.

3. Broader Threats in HB 96

A. Abandoning the Fair School Funding Formula

The bipartisan 2021 Fair School Funding formula addresses student needs). Scrapping it without a replacement reverts Ohio to unconstitutional funding chaos.

B. Shifting Tax Burdens to Homeowners

Since 2005, Ohio's commercial tax base has **shrunk by 18%** (Policy Matters Ohio). HB 96's property tax changes will accelerate this imbalance, squeezing families and seniors.

4. Solutions Rooted in Local Reality

We propose:

- **Exempt** voter-approved levies from carryover caps. Schools are inextricably joined to their community and the community to their school district. The state is founded on local control and communities should be trusted to make their own decisions regarding their local school district. .
- **Consider** and vet other state models that have proven to be successful.
- **Restore** the Fair School Funding Formula or replace it with an improved model that weighs poverty, special needs, and regional costs.
- We understand our residents' property tax burden. We also understand that this is a result of the current public school funding formula. We encourage our legislators to research other approaches and means of reducing property taxes that do not reduce any voter-approved levies.

Final Appeal

We urge the assembly to abide by the Ohio Constitution to appropriately and adequately invest in the future of Ohio through public education, while also trusting local leaders to manage their communities' resources.

HB 96, as written, fails our students, our voters, and Ohio's future. We stand ready to collaborate on solutions.

**Respectfully submitted on behalf of the
Medina City Schools Board of Education**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew D. West". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Andrew D. West, President