

Clyde Cameron Piatt

Testimony on *BILL No. 68*

Senate Education Committee

House Bill 96

May 12, 2025

For Meeting May 14, 2025 10 a.m.

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing on House Bill 96.

I have lived in Westerville, Ohio for over 30 years and have never seen a bill like HB96 regarding giving back money from financially sound school districts back to taxpayers because a few of them may want a refund. Those that want a refund are misguided that a one-time refund will put them on solid ground.

I've voted for levies so the schools could have a secure financial standing that benefits students by consistency and lowers costs of any bonds issued due to the strong financial foundation. And now those supporting this provision are taking away my vote.

As a volunteer with the Westerville Education Foundation, currently serving as President, I've donated my time and resources to fund innovative programs in Westerville City Schools. Our grants to teachers will not make much of a difference if the schools are focused on survival instead of thriving. Businesses that support the Westerville Education Foundation - tell us the importance of developing skills like teamwork, innovative thinking, and problem solving, which are met when children receive an excellent education, including activities like clubs, sports, arts, and music. This bill would hamper those efforts for many school districts and lead to unaffordable fees for extracurriculars or the end of those programs.

This bill that would lead schools like Big Walnut School District, Olentangy School District, Westerville City Schools, and many other fiscally sound districts into a state of hazardous financial condition. The losses to education are not worth this one-time refund to many taxpayers who voted for the levies so that the schools would be fiscally sound.

Over the last two school years, the State has decreased its share of funding for our District by 20%, shifting more of the tax burden onto our local community.

The Ohio legislature's attempt to limit a District's operating carry-over cash balance to only 30%, will cost Westerville Schools almost \$110 million just in the 2025-26 school year. This loss of property tax revenue will drastically negatively impact our district.

Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan using 2025 data rather than outdated 2022 figures. Increase funding for special education to ensure every student receives the support they need. Stop unfunded mandates. Remove the provision restricting school cash balances to 30% or 90 days.