

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 testimony. My name is Kristin Bowes. I am a lifelong Ohio resident, parent of students in public education and have worked as a School Psychologist in public education for 23 years. I urge the committee to fully fund the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget using current data to determine the cost to educate and remove the cash carryover restrictions.

Strong public schools are the foundation of a thriving community, economy and democracy. Every dollar invested in public education yields long-term economic benefits, including higher earnings, lower unemployment and decreased reliance on social services. Well-funded schools increase property values and attract businesses.

As an educator, I witness every day the critical supports our public schools provide beyond academic instruction. We provide nutritious meals, social-emotional development, and connection to community resources for families in need. Schools offer essential mental health services, speech and occupational therapy, individualized support for students with disabilities, and English language learning programs. These services are not extra; they are vital to student success and well-being.

I am also deeply concerned about the proposed cash carryover provision, which unfairly penalizes districts for responsible financial planning. This policy would allow the state to reduce funding based on a district's cash reserves, funds that are often earmarked for critical needs such as special education services, facilities maintenance, transportation, or unexpected emergencies. Stripping districts of funding simply because they have exercised sound fiscal stewardship will have devastating consequences, forcing cuts to essential staff, programs, and services that students and families depend on. Public schools must be able to plan and save responsibly. My district will lose more than \$15 million in operating funds just in the 2025-26 school year. This loss of voter-approved property tax revenue will result in severe cuts to staff, classroom materials and student opportunities. This will create a fiscal emergency and create the need for more frequent ballot issues.

Please invest in Ohio's future and the nearly 90% of students who attend public schools by including the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget using current costs to educate. I urge you to remove the cash carryover restrictions. Please secure access to high-quality public education for all Ohio students to ensure long-term prosperity for our state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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