

Ohio Senate Education Committee
May 14, 2025
Sub HB 96

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ann Shroyer. I am a Westerville/Delaware County resident, and parent of a Westerville City Schools elementary student at Robert Frost Elementary - a school that just turned 50 years old this past fall. I also graduated long ago from Wapakoneta City Schools. I'm here to urge the committee to continue phasing in the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget and updating the true costs of educating students in that formula. The current HB 96 budget plan will destroy our public schools.

I know I am very lucky to live in a well run school district, where we have received the State Auditor's Award with Distinction for 13 years in a row for our budget reporting, We have had a solid budget plan, a required reserve, and yet - we are in deficit spending currently thanks to the continued decrease in state share of per student funding of our schools, the increasing number of unfunded mandates, and the inflationary costs that have hit all districts, and the failure of our school levy, mostly thanks to my county of Delaware, the wealthiest county in the state, which voted down 3 School levies and a fire levy for good measure in 2024. Our district will take a loss of \$110 MILLION next year if this budget passes. Our good budgeting will be PENALIZED by the clawback. My son's school is 50 years old - 20 years older than the supposedly decrepit Browns stadium - and his is not even the oldest building in the district. We are not frivolous with our funds.

I grew up in a rural part of Ohio where the biggest landowners and thus the biggest hit for property tax mills under an unfair funding formula. I was in overcrowded schools for most of my time there because we could not pass a levy with such an unfair Funding model. I went to 8th & 9th grade in a school that had served my grandmother and later Neil Armstrong. Blume was an ancient building with poor hvac, wildly non-compliant with ADA (even for the early 90s) and a myriad of other issues. I would have hoped that with the much belated Fair Funding Plan being enacted a few years ago, that my son would not have to see the same types of cuts that I saw in a poorly funded district - limited classes, increasing fees for sports and extracurriculars, and

programs cut. And yet - here we are, because the legislature is turning its back on a commitment to our children with the Fair School Funding Plan. The decrease of funding will hit my community schools hard - and we are lucky to have those aforementioned assets. I cannot imagine what these kinds of cuts will do to the public schools in rural areas, like my hometown of Wapakoneta and other areas near where I grew up. Communities that rally around their schools - my parents still go to football games. They helped coach and fundraise for my high school swim team back in the day. Business owners support and are supported by these public schools in rural communities. They are proud to donate to the theater programs and buy ads at sporting events to support public school students. This proposal to decrease state funding will only continue to gut public education in this state, devastating smaller communities, and disincentivizing businesses from locating in a state that is steadily moving towards the bottom in public education spending.

The current HB 96 School funding plan will force Westerville to have a ballot issue nearly every year for new operating levies because the clawback of our reserve takes no account of how a bond cycle works. The only reason our district did not make immediate cuts in staffing and programs last fall was because of our reserve.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to support the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools. Please continue phasing the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan into Ohio's budget and update the true costs of educating students into that formula and stop shrinking the state share of public education. I have shed tears thinking about the cuts to my son's schools. I have seen other parents and our school board members shed tears about what this current budget plan will do to our community. It will destroy a district that has won awards for its accounting, for its marching bands, arts, and scholars, and just recently Westerville North won the Ohio State Basketball Championship. This is my community. These are my neighbors, my family that will be hurt by these cuts. Our school board members are parents. Our teachers, faculty and staff are people I see at soccer games, bike rides, and Uptown festivals and shops. I choose to send my son to public schools, just like my parents did, and just like Neil Armstrong's parents did in Wapakoneta so long ago. Ohio's public schools helped put a man on the moon, we need to FAIRLY FUND our public schools now so we can see where our current public education students can take us next. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. These are OUR KIDS and OUR COMMUNITIES in Ohio.

I will now take any questions you may have.