

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, my name is David Atkinson, a junior from Belmont High School - A Dayton Public School. Due to proposed funding cuts to education, school districts in Ohio and nationally are losing funding. These proposed cuts will disproportionately affect children with disabilities, behavioral issues, and students in advanced placement. Federal spending for these programs made up less than 1% of the federal budget in 2024. The resources and support these children need to develop into functioning members of society are being threatened with no benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are already instances where deaf and blind children in this country are being denied an education due to these funding cuts. Without this funding, things as simple as a child with sight issues sitting closer to the board could be denied to children, if they are allowed to attend school at all, as many children without this funding will be denied any form of education. Not only will these cuts leave our disabled children behind, but they will also affect our brightest minds, as funding for exceptional student resources is also being cut.

Ohio is a home of innovation, and I fear for our future when we do not value taking care of our future leaders within our school system and instead suppress them. The debt this will cause for our future generations, will be far more costly than what it will take to educate our children. These cuts affect students with behavioral issues within our school system who require higher support as well. These students are not inherently bad. They are just literal children, many of whom are neglected at home and have school as their only refuge where they can receive the support they need to grow into functional adults. They need mentors, someone to step in and take care of them. At Dayton Public Schools we have systems in place that do this. These systems have existed as common sense for decades. These are our most vulnerable groups, as in this country we do not afford minors the same rights as we do adults, and because of this, it becomes increasingly difficult for these children to advocate for themselves. If we truly want to protect our children, as this government claims to want to do, we must be their advocates.

Lawmakers, we must safeguard their rights; including their right to education, as they cannot properly wield these rights without being educated on how to do so. These cuts are unjustifiable, they save us what is equivalent to a rounding error in the federal budget and directly go against our government's duty to protect its citizens. We should not pass a degenerate legislature that threatens to regress all that we have worked decades for. If this is allowed to happen, if we willfully put our most vulnerable groups at risk, we will not be remembered as being on the right side of history, and it will forever be a stain on this state's reputation. The purpose of government, of the state, is to protect and provide for its citizens and represent its constituents. The actions being taken right now to defund public education undermine the very principles that allow the state to exist. We are not asking for a lot, we are asking for the bare minimum.

Thank you for your time and attention in the critical matter.