

Through public education, I was given the opportunity to be here today and talk to you. I was recently able to visit the Ohio Statehouse, and through my American Government class, I have learned about the process of both the American and Ohio governments. I have learned how important it is to advocate for what you believe and to use your voice, no matter your view or your opinion. I would like to provide you with information on why I believe public education is so important.

Public schools are the backbone of our society, serving as foundational institutions that shape the lives of our children and the future of our communities. That is why it is so imperative that we maintain our funding.

Many public schools, including Westerville City Schools, where I attend, are in underserved areas. Our school district serves people from a wide range of backgrounds and incomes. Many districts face challenges due to insufficient resources and facilities. By maintaining funding, we can ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has access to a high-quality education that empowers us to reach our full potential.

Adequate financial resources enable schools to broaden their curricula to include essential programs such as art, music, physical education, and advanced placement courses. As a student who is in the International Baccalaureate program and is in AP classes, I believe it is so crucial to fund our schools so that I can continue those classes to further my education. A well-rounded education cultivates creativity and critical thinking and prepares students for the complexities of life. For students who cannot attend college or further their education beyond high school, these courses help to lead them down a path that can open the door for them to get higher education later in the future.

Adequate funding can open doors to various extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, and after-school programs. These opportunities not only enrich students' educational experiences but also instill vital skills such as teamwork, leadership, and resilience. As a captain of the Westerville South Track and Cross Country team, sports are a big part of my life. I have learned so many important values that I will be able to carry on into my life. Being a part of extracurricular activities is so crucial, just as many of you know, the game of life is a balance of work and play. Being a student is not always easy, but having the opportunity to have an outlet that lets you participate and compete in the sports that you are passionate about can be so life-changing for many.

In conclusion, I am asking for appropriate funding for our schools, and I urge you to please use current data to determine the actual cost to educate a child that reflects inflation today. Thank you for your time.