

Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 96

Senate Finance Committee

May 27, 2025

Abigail Drennen, Parent

Chair Jerry Cirino and members of the Finance committee of the Ohio Senate:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Abigail Drennen. I am a parent of two children who attend Case Elementary School within Akron Public Schools. I am also on our school PTA's board, as the communications chair, as well as an active member in our Akron Community (Ward 1).

I am here to advocate in support of the Fair School Funding Plan and **fully** funding Ohio's Public Schools in the budget bill (to current, 2025 numbers). I am writing to you today to **urge** you to prioritize public school funding in the upcoming budget and get our public schools the **\$1.8B** that has been promised via the Fair School Funding Plan. It is **crucial** that the Fair School Funding Plan is fully phased in and that the cost calculations used in the formula are updated to reflect the **current** economic climate. Outdated funding formulas put our children's education at risk.

My children are part of the 90% of Ohio kids who attend public schools, and while I want the world for my children, all children in the state of Ohio deserve schools that are properly and constitutionally funded. This isn't a radical concept. In fact, there is sweeping bi-partisan support of funding our schools fairly, and to current numbers and data. While Ohio's three-part, bi-partisan Fair School Funding Plan took years to pass, it is way over-due for implementation. This plan includes incredible amounts of research, edits and debate with legislators from both sides of the aisle helping to make it a reality. There is NO excuse for abandoning this plan now, as it is in its final phase of implementation. If there is room in the budget to continue to expand the illegal voucher system and supplement billionaires and the building of a new Browns stadium there is room to expand the constitutional right to a fair public-school education.

Our schools have been doing incredible work with limited budgets, it is time to fully and fairly fund them so all Ohio's kids can reach their full potential.

Additionally, since I am addressing the finance committee, I wanted to talk about the dollars and the return on the investment of funding Public schools properly vs funneling our tax dollars into the ineffective voucher program – As of the 2024/2025 budget year, we saw a record investment in the voucher program (\$1B+). However, as time has gone on, we've seen a **decrease** in private school enrollment, but an **increase** in voucher investment, while enrollment in public schools continues to grow and those dollars decrease. Additionally, research continues to show that voucher students perform worse than Public School Students – According to the

Cincinnati Enquirer, 88% of the time, kids taking vouchers attend private schools with lower proficiency rates than the school district in the private school's mailing city. Additionally, Fordham Institute found that vouchers hurt performance.

Finally, while the voucher program may have been created to "assist poor children in failed schools", in reality voucher dollars are going to families who are wealthy – more new EdChoice Voucher High School Recipients come from families making more than \$150K a year than families making less than \$120K a year. About \$2.3M of our tax dollars went to subsidize the private school tuitions of families who make more than \$250K a year AND \$242M of the \$272M sent to families for Traditional EdChoice were NOT considered "low income".

There is so much more I'd like to say on this subject, but trying to keep this testimony brief, so in summary, I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote yes to funding the Fair School Funding Plan.

Thank you!

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