
From the Office of the Mayor

5/23/2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for Ohio today. My name is Joe Begeny and I am currently the Mayor of Reynoldsburg Ohio, a suburban community just east of Columbus, a Member of the Ohio Mayor's Alliance, Chair of the Central Ohio Mayor's and Managers Association, a former member of the Reynoldsburg City School Board, and a former teacher from Columbus City Schools. I am here to discuss items in the budget in hopes that you will consider their inclusion.


In 2023 the State of Ohio passed Issue 2 that allowed for the use of recreational marijuana, including a 36% of the state excise tax to communities that host a recreational facility. This opportunity for expanding municipal revenue was a driving force in allowing a recreational facility in Reynoldsburg and other communities across Ohio and without those funds our direction may have been different. The potential funds would be used for support any new law enforcement measures that may accompany a facility like this as well as supporting and expanding our robust Parks and Recreation Programming. Given the limits in the Local Government Fund, I urge you to maintain the cannabis host community fund at the level the Citizens of Ohio voted for.

I also want to advocate for 90% of Ohio students, those that attend public education. As a former teacher, board member, and now Mayor I also request that the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan including the updated cost inputs be returned to the Budget. While many of us are here today because of public education and its continuing impact on our lives and communities, none of us have experienced a time where Ohio Public Schools were fully funded, but that can change with this budget. In the years after the Ohio Supreme Court ruled Ohio's system unconstitutional it seemed as if we may never find a path to equal school funding, but a breakthrough was made with what became known as the Cupp-Patterson Fair Funding Plan. This quantifiable, bipartisan approach provided the foundation that had long been missing from previous formulas. It wasn't perfect, no plan really is, but it was designed to move school funding in a positive direction. The inclusion of this plan in the last two budgets provided a breath of fresh air at a time when our students needed it most. Given the amount of financial planning needed by districts across the state, a consistent funding plan can help a district plan accordingly and potentially predict any future levy requests.

As Mayor I have often said that our City is only as strong as our schools, and our schools are only as strong as our city. Like many districts across the state Reynoldsburg is dealing with financial issues, oddly enough by managing its budget so well they have not had to go to the voters for a levy since 2010. With the failure of the most recent levy, cuts were made that if the fair funding plan is in the next budget, those programs, those opportunities for kids could come back. Given the potential for economic growth based on alignment of workforce needs and the school's ability to prepare students for jobs in high demand fields, it is the best long-term investment there is.

I know that there are questions about the sustainability of this plan, or if more funding will truly make a difference. I can say that our award winning Public Library system is fully funded and those results speak for themselves, but the real question is one I am often asked, "Mayor, how do I know what your priorities really are?" The simplest answer is to look at our budget. So I ask that when we look at Ohio's final budget, will we know what your priorities are?

I will take any questions you have and I thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



Joe Begeny
Mayor
City of Reynoldsburg