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The Honorable Jerry C. Cirino
Senator, Ohio's 18th Senate District
1 Capitol Square, Room 127
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Cirino,

On behalf of the South Central Ohio Educational Service Center, it is my pleasure to provide a few items for your consideration House Bill 96 as it is currently written. While there are certainly many provisions of the bill that will serve both Ohio's kids and public schools we are significantly concerned about the implications that the bill will have on school funding; particularly relating to the future of Fair School Funding as well as the proposed cap of 30% on carry-over balances.

First and foremost, Ohio's K-12 education structure relies on locally-elected school boards whose members are farmers, small business owners, nurses and residents from dozens of other backgrounds and who have often lived for decades in the school community. They are best-equipped to make decisions impacting the financial position of local school districts. Generally, a "one-size fits all" change in education funding and regulations is often not met with the best outcomes. However, the currently proposed carry over balance cap removes this local control from every community in Ohio.

If the Ohio Senate is determined to retain a carryover balance policy we ask that the cap be removed and that each district be required to establish their own policy for carry over balances that establish both minimum and maximum thresholds. Additionally, we ask that the Senate endeavor to preserve the principles embodied in the Fair School Funding plan even if inputs cannot be fully funded. FSF is currently the most effective and efficient way for the state to determine the costs to educate students across Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of these factors while developing Ohio's operating budget for the coming biennium.

Respectfully,

Sandra L. Mers