

Dear Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for your public service.

As you work on the State Budget, I ask that please:

- return the Fair School Funding Plan to the state budget
- fully fund the Plan as an investment in Ohio's future
- don't interfere with school district carry over funds; that practice is a sound way to address the time lapses between school levies and a refund undercuts the ability of school districts to manage their finances
- don't force schools to sell schools at less than 69% capacity. Local school boards are capable of managing their assets. Be honest with voters – this is another scheme to divert public assets to non public schools. That is not a good use of our tax dollars..

It saddens me that, for decades, our legislature has failed to comply with court orders and the Ohio Constitution as to school funding. As you know, the Ohio Constitution requires the legislature to fund a public school system that gives equal access to resources for a high quality public education. This presents a sad example for our children as to the importance of the rule of law.

Regarding the Fair School Funding Plan, this is a bipartisan solution to the 26 years of unconstitutional school funding. It's a solid plan that reduces reliance on property taxes, increases the investment in the public system, and is fair to taxpayers and communities. Put the Fair School Funding Plan in the budget and fully fund it.

Our State Constitution reflects the fact that our public schools belong to all of us and benefit all of us, promote equality, and serve the common good. Free, quality public education is the foundation of our democracy.

I ask that you review your priorities. How can you justify spending \$600 million on a stadium for a billionaire, but not adequately fund the education of more than 1.5 million public school students, the people who will create our future as voters, parents, taxpayers, innovators, and the workforce. How can you claim to want to build the economy of Ohio while shortchanging the students who will provide the workforce? Our young people won't be educated adequately with the skills needed by employers if you provide them with an underfunded school system.

I object to any expenditure of tax dollars for vouchers for nonpublic schools. It is a misuse of tax funds to authorize vouchers to the extent of more than \$1.2 billion – this is simply an income subsidy or tax rebate – call it what you want, it's a giveaway of public dollars - to families of about 180,000 private school students who used private schools without public funds. Yet our legislative leaders say that funding the Fair School Funding Plan, which supports 90% of Ohio's students, is "unsustainable". Stop the vouchers and fund our public schools.

Finally, not related to funding but in the House version of the budget, replacing 11 elected and 8 appointed state school board members with 5 appointed, 2 of which are not representing public schools, is a disgraceful power grab. The state board of education had already been stripped of much of its power in the last legislative session, in a manner inconsistent with our Constitution. Why allow the further dismantling of an elected body that serves our children? The takeover of our elected state board of education is shameful.

Please do better. Please support our public school system and our children.

Respectfully,
Linda Striefsky
Ohio voter