

Testimony for HB 96 Senate Finance Committee

May 26, 2025

Kari A. Sommers, Ohio mom of 3 in public schools

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

As a mom of three children who have blossomed in public schools, and as a product of public schools myself, there are few items in the state budget that are more important to me than funding for public schools. I was in high school when the way Ohio funds its public schools was declared unconstitutional. With two parents who were public school teachers themselves, issues with funding were frequent topics at our dinner table. While I myself have voted for every school levy I've had the opportunity to vote on, I know that it is not always tenable for residents living with a tight budget to do so, and I think it's unconscionable that our state legislature is now considering sending the funding for public schools right back to that unconstitutional situation. In rural Tuscarawas County, we grow a lot of the state's food, so we have a lot more land than people. We rely on state funding to balance out the lower property tax income that our schools bring in so that we can still give our students a first-class education. I have gone to or watched almost every school board meeting in my kids' district, Dover City Schools. I listen to the treasurer's report each month, and I know that our district is not being irresponsible with taxpayer money. Requiring districts to forecast their budgets and then pulling the rug out from under them by cancelling the funding formula they've been planning for will be disastrous. How can a school district be expected to plan responsibly for the future when the legislature decides on a whim to rip away the money it critically needs to educate all students, according to the state constitution?

I am asking the Senate to reinstate the Fair School Funding Formula back into the budget bill. As it stands, my Senate District, District 31, will be underfunded by \$92 million. Without this funding, schools in our district will be forced to make drastic changes to their staff and programs.

Thank you,

Kari A. Sommers