



Dover City Schools

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

May 27, 2025

Chairman Cirino:

On behalf of Dover City Schools, it is my pleasure to provide a few items for your consideration House Bill 96 as it is currently written. While there are certainly some provisions of the bill that will serve both Ohio's students and public schools, we are deeply concerned about the implications that the bill will have on school funding -- particularly with regard *to the future of Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP)*, as well as the *proposed cap of 30% on carry-over balances*.

Dover's forecast indicates a healthy cash carryover for the current year: *a result of strong, responsible fiscal management*. However, our reserves are projected to deplete rapidly as we prioritize the critical repair or replacement of our aging school buildings. We have strategically leveraged one-time funds, as well as savings from initiatives like insurance consortium changes. This responsible approach ensures that our property taxpayer dollars are maximized.

A significant portion of our facilities requires immediate attention, with numerous roofs needing replacement to maintain safe, warm, and dry learning environments for our students. To address these capital needs effectively, we are actively engaged with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission to evaluate the most advantageous path forward -- whether comprehensive renovations or the construction of new facilities. Our cash carry-over is directly related to making the best, most financially prudent construction decisions for our community and is part of a long-term plan supported by our community. The currently proposed carry over balance cap removes this local control from every community in Ohio

Alarmingly, current budget proposals pose a direct threat to these carryover funds to address our pressing building needs. Additionally, without the full phase in of the FSFP, the need to divert funds from essential building projects to cover operational costs will become unavoidable, likely derailing the meaningful facility discussions we have been having with our community. On top of that, abandoning the FSFP will likely lead to student program reductions and/or the need for additional local taxpayer funding through a ballot initiative.

Addressing Tomorrow's Challenges Today

This will place a greater burden on our local taxpayers to fund the education of our students, as the state incrementally simply reduces its share of responsibility.

In short, the confluence of these factors presents a concerning outlook for the long-term financial health and stability of our school district.

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. For example, Dover's cash balance policy requires no less than 60 days of general fund operating expenditures with a maximum of 150 days. In the case of excess reserves, the administration is required to develop a plan for these funds. *If the Ohio Senate is determined to retain a carry-over balance policy, we request 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 FSFP*, even if inputs cannot be fully funded. The FSFP 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 budget for the coming biennium.

Sincerely,



Karie McCrate
Superintendent
Dover City Schools



Kathryn Brugger
Treasurer
Dover City Schools

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