

## Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee - HB No. 96

**Speaker: Kelley Stocker**

**Date: May 22, 2025**

Good afternoon, members of the committee. I come to you today with many different interests in public education. I wear a lot of hats. Just a few of them include being a teacher, a parent, and a taxpayer.

As a teacher in Westerville City Schools, I see the power and potential public education holds for every child who walks through our doors. And yes, I do mean *every* child—because unlike many charter and private schools, we take them all. You may see us as a series of statistics—graduation rates, attendance figures, test scores. But I see students as individuals. For some, success is passing a state exam. For others, success is simply making it to school that day, despite hunger, housing instability, or trauma. I see kids who are fed because we serve them breakfast and lunch. I see students who win, who lose, and who try again the next day. That is what public education makes possible.

I'm also a parent. My son just finished kindergarten in the Westerville City School District. He has twelve more years ahead of him, and frankly, I'm terrified about what that journey will look like. Will his school still have counselors? Nurses? Will his class sizes balloon even more? Will his teachers stay?

As a taxpayer, I am appalled at the fiscal irresponsibility on display in this legislature. Decreased revenue isn't a natural disaster—it's a *choice* Ohio lawmakers have made through irresponsible policy. And don't stand there and say you "don't have the money" to fully fund public schools, when you continue to send public dollars to for-profit schools and private institutions that operate without the same transparency and accountability standards. Our state's kids deserve more than the leftovers in our state budget.

Public dollars should fund *public* services. We don't get to opt out of paying for police or roads—we shouldn't be allowed to defund our public schools under the false promise of "choice." Would you give me a voucher to hire my own private security in lieu of paying my local police department. Oh and can I also order my local police department to pick up my private security and bring them to me at their own expense?! I didn't think so. It's obviously a ridiculous notion. It is equally ridiculous that this is exactly what we do to public schools here in Ohio.

Ohio's public schools educate 90% of our children. This budget should reflect that reality. I *demand* that you prioritize implementation of the Fair Schools Funding Plan, a bipartisan plan informed by both tax and education experts that provides an evidence based formula for paying for our public schools. As a teacher, a mother, and a taxpayer, I demand that you stop playing games with our kids' futures and with my money.

Thank you,

Kelley Stocker