

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Linda Wagner and I am a retired resident of Galena. I am generally appalled by the Ohio House Budget Bill that you are now considering, including the many overt attacks on public education that are visible in the House version of this budget.

Ignoring the fact that approximately 90% of the children in Ohio are educated in public schools, the House bill significantly underfunds them. The House budget bill randomly allots a number to fund public education rather than using the bipartisan formula that relies on identified and defensible costs. The number is approximately 10% of what it would be to fully fund public schools. There is no rational reason to backtrack on the research that went into this formula. Use of this random amount for funding may even be unconstitutional, taking us back 30 years. Personally, I would like to see students get good educations so there is someone well educated to take care of me in my golden years.

It also tries to reign in property taxes by capping what a district can have in reserves. This makes no sense whatsoever as a tax strategy and punishes school districts who have been good fiscal managers. It will ultimately push many districts to have to ask for more money from property taxes to meet the district's needs. Additionally, there is a clear strike against public schools since no other entity (townships, counties, etc.) that rely on property taxes are required to have only a 30% cash reserve.

The bill also attacks public libraries, removing the source of guaranteed funding (public library fund, PLF) as a percentage of revenue and returning to a whim of the legislature number. This, again, makes it very difficult to budget when the funds for the library are largely tied to the whims of the legislature, rather than an established formula. Even more importantly, as established in the budget, libraries are set up to possibly receive no funding in the future. The requirement that books in the library with an LGBTIA+ theme must be housed in its own section of the library is ridiculous and has no place in a budget. The cost to rural libraries that tend to be smaller and don't have the space of bigger urban libraries might force some libraries to close. Also, the language is written so broadly that ANY book where characters fall in love could be included under this requirement. Libraries are a huge benefit to communities across the age spectrum and deserve to be funded appropriately.

Please do consider the opinions of constituents and not just big money donors when deciding what needs to be funded in this budget (do not fund the new Brown stadium). Please DO fully fund public schools and DO reinstate the PLF for libraries.

Thank you.

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