

Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 96
Senate Finance Committee
2025 May 29

Ms. Jessica Parent

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jessica Parent, and I am the proud parent of a Big Walnut Intermediate School student. I believe that as a citizen of this great state, and especially as the parent of an Ohio public school student, that is my civic duty to testify to the harms that I believe will rise from the proposed school funding, as outlined by House Bill 96. As I look at you sitting before me, I believe that you hold the future of Ohio's citizens, and most especially its children, as your greatest responsibility and approach that responsibility with all the gravity it demands. You ran for the office you hold, because you want to make Ohio the greatest state in the Union, and you care about the lives and prosperity of those you represent. It is because of your care for the future of Ohio's children that I am asking you to amend HB 96 to ensure public schools are fairly and adequately funded in accordance with the Fair School Funding Plan.

As I am sure you are aware, Ohio's public schools were found to be unconstitutionally underfunded in 1996. This problem has yet to be fully remedied, and House Bill 96 further exacerbates the problem by reducing recommended funding while punishing the fiscally responsible spending and saving trends implemented by superintendents and school boards across the state. House Bill 96 wants to penalize schools for having cash reserves on hand. In a growing district like mine, where we already have plans for these funds, and an active levy on the books, the guaranteed harm to the district is incalculable. And the only foreseeable remedy would be the passage of additional levies, or weathering out the yo-yo effect of constantly adjusting and readjusting property tax rates based on District reserves.

Additionally, this bill manages to find additional funding for Ohio's school voucher, or EdChoice, program; a program that already steals money from our public school systems by unconstitutionally drawing its funding from the same budget line item as public schools while at the same time violating Ohio's constitutional division of church and state by funneling tax payer dollars to religious schools. The real kick in the teeth? 90% of EdChoice funds are going to families above the low income threshold who were already affording to send their children to private schools.

Somehow, this bill also finds a way to funnel \$600 million of tax payer money into the pockets of the Haslam family in order to fund the building of a new Browns stadium. The Haslams net worth is valued at roughly \$14.4 billion. They do not need \$600 million, and while our schools are underfunded and overcrowded. They could write a single

check for the stadium and not even notice the money was missing. Our children in the Ohio public school system rely on the quality of their education to get into good colleges and get good paying jobs. Do not deny them their shot at the American Dream while benefiting Billionaires at their expense. Our children deserve better.

House Bill 96 takes from the poor and middle class and gives to the wealthy and privileged in the worst version of socialism ever. This is not how we build a better and stronger Ohio. It is only by investing in our public schools that we ensure a better future for our children. Fairly funding Ohio's public schools is an investment in our their future. Passing House Bill 96, as currently written, sends the message to public school students, especially those from rural and impoverished areas, that they are less important than a football stadium, that their hopes, dreams and aspirations are less important than those born to families with greater financial privilege. And those things simply aren't true. Public schools deserve to be fairly funded because Ohio's children deserve bright and promising futures that are not predicated on their zip code or the amount of their parents' paychecks. I trust you feel the same.

Thank you for you time. I know you will do right by our children and our state at large by ensuring fair school funding is codified in the state budget.