

Good morning Chair Cerino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for hearing me this morning.

My name is Dan Heintz. While I testify today speaking only for myself, I am proud to share that I am a member of the Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education. I am a public school teacher, a member of the Ohio Education Association, and a member of the steering committee for the Vouchers Hurt Ohio Lawsuit. Perhaps most importantly, my wife, son and I are all products of Ohio's great public schools. Public education matters to me.

I am here today to encourage you to fulfil the promise made by this body first in 2021, and then again in 2023 to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan in the 2025 budget. In 2021, Senators Cirino, Blessing, Brenner and Lang voted for the budget which included the Fair School Funding Plan. In 2023, Senators Cirino, Chaves, Brenner and Lang voted for the budget which included the Fair School Funding Plan. So today, I, and I believe most taxpayers, expect you to fulfil those promises by voting once more to support a budget fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan. The credibility of the General Assembly rests on this, for if a legislator or legislature breaks their promise to citizens, the entire notion of representative democracy is broken. To put it very simply, if we break our word, our word is worthless.

Why is fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan so important? First, as everyone in this room certainly knows, nearly 30 years ago, our State Supreme Court declared our way of funding public education to be in violation of our State Constitution, primarily because of its over reliance on property taxes. By fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan, you will align our funding with the constitution.

Second, The Fair School Funding Plan is critical because, for the first time, it identifies how much it costs to educate our students, with a recognition that different students have different needs. Ohio's 270,000 students with disabilities and the 600+ school districts serving them are desperately in need of the financial support necessary to address the individual needs of this vulnerable group.

Finally, by ensuring that all of our school districts have the funds necessary to educate the students in their desks, the Fair School Funding Plan will help to reverse the decline in Ohio's performance on national rankings. When Governor Strickland left office in 2011, Ohio was ranked 4th in the country for K-12 public education. Today, we are ranked 38th.

Article 6, Section 2 of the Ohio Constitution directs the General Assembly to fund a "thorough and efficient" system of public education. This is the birthright of every Ohio child.

The final thought I'd like to leave you with is this: The work you are doing is genuinely important. Your service is an opportunity to make a meaningful, long lasting difference in people's lives. Years from now, each of you are certain to be asked "What is the vote you are most proud of?" What could be a better answer to that inevitable question than "I voted to ensure that Ohio's children receive the education envisioned by our forefathers."

Thank you for your service,

Dan Heintz