

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

You don't know me, but my name is Megan Smith. I'm a resident of 44720 in Stark County. I'm a parent of a very bright 4th grader who LOVES school and am also a member of a faith community working to make our small section of the world better for all the people who live there. Today I'm writing to you on behalf of my child, my church and the non-profit organization associated with it that is doing so many good things for the community it serves.

My kiddo's favorite subjects are math and science. She THRIVES at school and is a high-performing student. But she requires some additional accommodations that most of her peers don't. This includes extra meetings and extra effort on the part of her teachers and administration. Our school and the services she receives are SO IMPORTANT to her success. When I learned from my school board members that our school district is scheduled to lose \$600-700,000 in special education funding in this biennium budget, it was like a punch to the gut. This loss of funding will directly impact my child. We would be so disappointed to see any of her services or accommodations cut because of a lack of funding. Please implement the Fair School Funding Plan in this budget.

Additionally, we are very concerned about the revised public library funding in this budget. Our local public library is our quiet place to do homework after school, the place where we discover new stories for book reports, and gain knowledge about the world we live in. It's a place where we can meet neighbors and have conversations about things that are important to us. We would like to see library funding reverted to a percentage of the general revenue fund, rather than as a line-item as currently proposed.

On behalf of my church and its non-profit organization, I am very concerned about the cuts of funding to foodbanks, affordable housing programs, the Welcome Home Ohio program and the language surrounding disinvestment in the Medicaid expansion program. The leaders in my church are working so hard to help mind the gap in an area that has virtually been forgotten by elected leaders at all levels.

The median income in the area is right around \$30,000 per year. There are no grocery stores nearby for people to buy healthy food. So our church and its non-profit have stepped in and created a free market in conjunction with our local food bank. They are providing healthy fruits and vegetables to those who need them most and have the least access to them. This doesn't happen without proper funding to local foodbanks.

Most of the homes in the area are rentals with owners who jack up the rent to make an extra buck, but don't provide a safe, clean space for tenants to live. So our church and its non-profit again stepped in and started buying homes to rehab and sell or rent at an affordable price for families. This doesn't happen without investment in affordable housing or the Welcome Home Ohio program, a part of the Ohio Department of Development.

And finally, with a median income of only \$30,000, the people in this neighborhood rely on Medicaid for access to the healthcare they need and deserve. I respectfully ask that you consider what our state's true priorities are when deciding where to invest our revenue. Are we going to give money to big businesses that don't really need it? Or are we going to invest in the people and children who need it most?

Thank you for your time and attention to these matters.

Megan Smith  
Resident of 44720