

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nikki Mayhew. I am a lifelong resident of Cincinnati, an engaged community member, and a professional graphic designer. Today, however, I come before you as a mother of two adolescents and as an active participant in public school committees, to express my *strong opposition* to the proposed cuts to public education included in House Bill 96, House Bill 129, and Senate Bill 6.

Both of my children attend Montessori programs within Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), a district that has proudly offered this innovative educational pathway for 50 years. Montessori programs in CPS have long provided child-centered, developmentally informed instruction that supports academic excellence and social-emotional development. But sustaining this success *requires* adequate funding.

My younger child, a rising fifth grader, recently reached “accomplished” status on Ohio State Tests for the first time—an achievement made possible through the dedicated support of qualified staff and access to critical student services. Like many children, he began Kindergarten during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in a virtual format. Only now is he beginning to catch up to pre-pandemic expectations. Many of his peers, however, are still working to overcome the learning disruptions and mental health challenges exacerbated by that period.¹

If the proposed budget cuts move forward, programs that provide targeted interventions, academic support, and mental health services will be at risk. These supports are not optional—they are essential to ensuring that all children, regardless of zip code, are able to succeed academically and socially.

It is worth noting that 89% of Ohio’s children attend public schools.² Reducing funding for the systems that serve the overwhelming majority of our state’s students is not only fiscally shortsighted but morally indefensible. A well-funded public education system is one of the most powerful drivers of workforce readiness, civic engagement, and long-term economic stability.³

Therefore, I respectfully urge you to fully fund the **Fair School Funding Plan**, a bipartisan framework designed to equitably allocate state education dollars based on the actual cost of educating a child and each district’s capacity to pay.⁴ Cutting education funding today undermines our children’s futures tomorrow.

Senators, I implore you: *please* oppose House Bills 96 and 129 and Senate Bill 6, and take action to protect the educational resources our students depend on.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio’s children.

Footnotes:

1. Dorn, Emma, et al. "COVID-19 and Education: The Lingering Effects of Unfinished Learning." McKinsey & Company, July 27, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com>
2. Ohio Department of Education. "Public School Enrollment Data, 2023." <https://education.ohio.gov>
3. Hanushek, Eric A., et al. "The Economic Value of Education." Education Next, vol. 11, no. 1, 2011. <https://www.educationnext.org>
4. Ohio General Assembly. "Fair School Funding Plan Overview." Legislative Service Commission. <https://www.lsc.ohio.gov>