

“FY2026-2027 Operating Budget”- HB 96
Keep Fair Funding and Protect Public Schools
Melissa Meyer
Written Testimony
Ohio Senate Finance Committee

May 30, 2025

Dear Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Meyer, and I'm writing to you as both a teacher and a mom. I have children in the Berea City School District, and I care deeply about what happens in our public schools, not just for my family, but for every child in our community.

I'm concerned about the current version of the House budget and the changes it makes to the Fair School Funding Plan. This plan was designed to fix a broken system, one that relies too heavily on property taxes and creates deep inequities between districts. Cutting off the final two years of the plan stops that progress short. In Berea, that means we'd receive a smaller increase, just 4.5% instead of the 7.9% we were supposed to get. That difference might not make headlines, but it absolutely matters in classrooms.

At the same time, the budget proposes a \$500 million increase in private school voucher funding, more than double the increase for public schools. That's hard to accept when 90% of Ohio's kids attend public schools. Shifting resources away from the schools that serve the majority of our students just doesn't make sense, especially when so many districts are doing everything they can to stretch every dollar.

I'm also very concerned about House Bill 96, which would cap school district cash balances and redirect anything over 30% for property tax relief. On paper, this may look like efficiency, but in reality, it puts districts like Berea in a difficult position. Those funds, about \$2 million in our case, are already part of our long-term financial plan. They're not extra. They're how we've managed to stay stable without asking voters for more operating funds since 2012. Redirecting that money would directly impact student programs and break the trust between schools and the communities that support them.

And I want you to know, Berea is doing amazing work. We've made real investments in student well-being, including calming corners in every elementary classroom, strong mental health partnerships, and full-time support specialists in each school. Our School Showcase this year

brought our community together to celebrate students' talents, creativity, and hard work. These are the kinds of programs that only happen when schools are funded well and led by people who care.

As a teacher, I see every day what happens when students feel supported and seen. As a mom, I want my kids, and all kids, to grow up in schools where they have the chance to thrive. That can only happen if we continue investing in public education.

I urge you to fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan. Please protect locally approved school funds and give districts the stability they need. And before expanding private voucher programs, please make sure our public schools, the ones serving the vast majority of Ohio's children, are fully and fairly funded.

Thank you for your time, and for considering the real impact your decisions will have on families like mine.

Sincerely,

Melissa Meyer
Berea, Ohio
Parent and Teacher, Berea City School District