

Punishing public schools for responsible management of public dollars

In 2023 **Governor DeWine** had this to say about Ohio's \$3.5 billion rainy day fund "We are delivering on our promises to Ohioans with conservative management and sound budgeting. *Our rainy day fund is another way we are showing strong results for our citizens.*"

Former Lt. Governor John Husted added "Saving for a rainy day is *a foundational element of running a responsible government.*"

Former Senate President Matt Huffman concurred "*This is sound fiscal policy. Having this fund will allow the state to continue needed services.*"

Conversely, HB 96 includes a provision that would penalize public schools for their sound budgeting. It would gut their rainy day fund for "needed services".

By being forced to return to taxpayers all surplus revenue over 30%, public school systems will not have funds to offset inflation, to make needed updates, or to restore their essential services and staff after a failed levy.

This provision would punish public school officials for responsible cost cutting measures. Moreover, *it would create confusion for local taxpayers, who would be whipsawed by an endless cycle of rebates followed by new levy requests.*

A more reasonable alternative

Let me presume to suggest a better way. Three conditions that any budgeting plan should ideally satisfy ...

- * *meet the state's constitutional responsibility* to fund a thorough and efficient system of common schools
- * have *bipartisan support*
- * gain the *governor's approval*

In fact, such a plan currently exists and is reaching the final stages of implementation.

The Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) in Ohio is a *bipartisan effort* to fund K-12 education in a way that ensures all students have access to a quality education, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status. It addresses disparities by calculating the actual cost of educating a child in each district and having the state then contribute a fair share.

Governor DeWine has publicly stated his commitment to the guiding principles of FSFP. This funding formula would also satisfy the Ohio Supreme Court's directive to the state to do their fair share.

All that remains to ensure that public schools get their fair share is to *have the FSFP account for inflation*.

HB 96 is proposing to adopt a short-sighted unwieldy gimmick to rebate monies to taxpayers by depleting the districts' rainy day funds.

Instead, please consider making an ongoing commitment to *fully fund the 80% of all Ohio students who attend public schools*. These young people are our future. Both they and local taxpayers deserve better than what HB 96 is proposing.