

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 96
Senate Finance Committee
05/27/2025

Rachel Salyers

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, and members of the Finance Committee of the Ohio Senate:

I am writing as a concerned teacher in Ohio to urge you to fairly and fully fund Ohio's Fair School Funding Plan in the upcoming biennial budget. I teach English to speakers of other languages here in Ohio. I am worried about our families. I am worried about our vulnerable communities, I am worried about my immigrant neighbors, veteran neighbors, my trans neighbors, and my disabled neighbors. I am concerned for our schools, libraries, and public services. I am worried about the poor and homeless. Please do not take away funds for our public necessities.

How current policy is eroding support for Ohioan students:

- **Real-dollar decline in state support.**
[Ohio Archives Bureau of Labor Statistics](#); [FY2024 District Profile Report](#)
- **Stagnant base-cost inputs.** Because the Fair School Funding Plan still relies on FY 2022 staffing and cost data, the formula understates today's true instructional, life skills, and transportation expenses—particularly acute in districts like ours with escalating multilingual and student wellness needs. [HONESTY FOR OHIO EDUCATION](#)
- **Proposed 30 percent (90-day) cash-balance cap.** Imposing a 30 percent ceiling on reserves would compel schools to draw down the fiscally responsible fund balance that stabilizes operations between semi-annual tax settlements and internally “floats” state and federal grants—an advance of roughly \$1.5 million per month, or \$18 million annually, while awaiting reimbursement. Eroding this cushion would undermine the district's capacity to meet payroll, sustain transportation, and deliver mandated special-education services, pushing public schools toward fiscal emergency and forcing more frequent levy requests.

Funding priorities we respectfully request

1. Do not reduce the State's share base cost in the FY 2026–27 biennium, and preserve the \$2.7 million in supplemental targeted assistance—funding outside the base-cost formula that current proposals would have eliminated, spared only by House Bill language maintaining FY 2025 levels.
2. Update all cost inputs to current-year data, so the formula reflects actual salaries, benefits, and service contracts.
3. Fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan using the updated data and higher minimum share.

4. Remove the 30 percent/90-day cash-balance restriction from any budget-related legislation.

Why this matters

Public Schools try to foster a consistent, collaborative learning culture where each student is engaged, encouraged, and empowered to achieve full potential. Fair, reliable State funding—free from arbitrary caps—will:

- Sustain wrap-around services that mitigate poverty, homelessness, and language barriers.
- Reduce the size and frequency of local levies in a community already shouldering a heavy tax burden.
- Preserve financial stability and avert state fiscal-distress interventions.
- **Ohio's bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan took years to pass.** Years of research, edits, and debate went into it. Legislators from BOTH sides of the aisle helped make it a reality.
- **The House didn't offer another plan.** They knew they couldn't find something more thoroughly researched and vetted — so they didn't even try.
- **The fiscally responsible solution is to put the BIPARTISAN Fair School Funding Plan (INCLUDING updated data inputs) back into the state budget.**
- ***We have rural areas in our district. If Ohio doesn't fully phase in the Fair School Funding Plan, rural areas will get hit the hardest.***

I respectfully ask you to champion these priorities throughout the budget process and vote for a final package that fully funds Ohio's public schools. Our students, educators, and families are counting on your leadership.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to Ohio's children.

Sincerely,
Rachel Salyers