

**Senate Finance Committee
HB 96 Written Interested Party Testimony
Chad Hilliker, Superintendent
Hamilton County Educational Service Center
May 30, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Cirino, Vice-Chair Chavez, and Ranking Minority Member Senator Hicks-Hudson. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the education provisions in proposed HB 96, and some requests for additions to the bill. My name is Chad Hilliker, and I am the Hamilton County Educational Service Center (HCESC) superintendent. We serve the needs of school districts and private schools (and their respective students) in and around the Hamilton County area.

The Hamilton County ESC has twenty-three member districts serving over 110,000 public school students. We also serve a myriad of private schools and their students as they choose to work with us.

ESC State Funding

The HCESC is in support of the request by the Ohio Educational Service Centers Association (OESCA) regarding the ESC funding portion of the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP). Educational Service Centers provide services to public school districts and private schools. It is a well documented fact that for every dollar the state invests in ESCs, we provide more than eight dollars in tax savings. This is in addition to the many cost saving fee for service programs we provide both public and private schools. In fact we have expanded our work with the private school community during the last five years.

There are also statutory requirements for services ESCs provide on behalf of the state. Educational Service Centers (ESCs) are considered local education agencies (LEAs) and school districts under state and federal law. Additionally, we are the largest component of Ohio's Educational Regional Service System (ERSS), which has the statutory mandate to support state and regional education initiatives and efforts to improve school effectiveness and student achievement.

The cost data used to determine ESC funding under the FSFP has not been updated since the formula was first developed and implemented. While we appreciate the current version of HB 96 that continues the phase-in of ESC funding, it would be helpful if the Senate were to update the data used within the formula to more accurately reflect costs.



We urge the General Assembly to fully phase in the ESC component of the FSFP, including the appropriate update of cost data. The cost to the state for this update would be relatively small in the education funding space, and with that, the state would realize a significant return on the investment.

This concludes my written testimony. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Chad Hilliker".

Chad Hilliker
Superintendent, HCESC