

Testimony on House Bill 96
Senate Finance Committee
May 28, 2025

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

Thank you for taking the time to consider my written testimony. My name is Amanda Marissa Rowley, and I live in Cincinnati. I am the mother of two children who currently attend public elementary schools in the Cincinnati Public School District. I've worked in education for over two decades—as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, and now a district-level coach. I am also a proud graduate of Ohio public schools, and I've dedicated my entire professional life to advancing educational equity.

I am writing to strongly urge you to reinstate the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) in the Ohio Biennial Budget for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. As you know, it is the constitutional responsibility of the Ohio legislature to ensure that every child in the state has access to a fully and fairly funded public education system.

House Bill 96 undermines that responsibility. By dismantling the FSFP before it has been fully implemented, restricting districts' ability to carry over funds, and expanding the use of public dollars for universal private school vouchers, the bill significantly weakens our public education infrastructure. These measures threaten to shift even more of the financial burden onto local taxpayers and deepen the inequities the FSFP was designed to correct. It's a step backwards—both fiscally and morally—and it violates the spirit of the 1997 DeRolph ruling that deemed Ohio's school funding system unconstitutional.

The FSFP was developed with bipartisan support and grounded in research on the actual cost of educating Ohio's students. It also takes into account what local communities can reasonably contribute through taxation. To abandon this plan is to risk underfunding our public schools by millions—if not billions—of dollars, with the consequences falling squarely on the shoulders of Ohio's students, educators, and families.

Nearly 90% of Ohio's K–12 students, including my own children, attend public schools. This is not just about my family—it's about ensuring a just and sustainable future for every student across our state. Public dollars belong in public schools, and the quality of a child's education should not depend on their ZIP code or their parents' income.

I urge you today to fully implement and fund the FSFP using up-to-date estimates that adjust the formula's base cost inputs to account for rising costs of goods and services. Our students deserve nothing less than a school funding system that meets their needs and honors the promise of equal opportunity.

Thank you for your attention and for the work you do on behalf of Ohio's children.

Sincerely,
Amanda Marissa Rowley
Cincinnati, Ohio