

Testimony to the Senator Finance Committee Regarding House Bill 96

Chair Senator Wilson, Vice Chair Senator Lang, Senator Hicks-Hudson, Ranking Minority, and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present my testimony today on House Bill 96. My name is Sally Green a Tusky Valley School Board member, as well as the 2024 OSBA President

The Impact of Funding on Educational Quality and Workforce Readiness

Having visited over 150 schools, I have observed significantly the quality of education provided. Funding plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of our students. While many schools are committed to supporting their students, they often face challenges.

For instance, I have encountered high school students on the verge of dropping out who, with the support of dedicated staff, were able to engage in meaningful learning opportunities. This engagement not only led to their graduation but also paved the way for successful employment. In Richmond Heights, I observed the use of cockpit simulators, while in Hicksville, the ACES initiative fostered a strong sense of belonging among students.

Numerous schools have implemented care systems to address essential needs, such as food, in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At Fremont Schools, I witnessed a unique class that integrates construction and plant growth, providing vital food support for both students and their families.

In my district, programs like Project Lead the Way, alongside speech and debate and band, have led to successful career pathways for many students. However, these initiatives are at risk due to the Governor's proposed budget cuts. Each of these examples highlights how quality education can cultivate career readiness for students after graduation.

These Hands-on experiences described are crucial for quality workforce readiness. They allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, develop practical skills, and enhance their problem-solving abilities. As funding continues to decrease below the rate of inflation, schools will face

decisions that threaten educational growth and limit opportunities essential for the success of our students in the workforce.

At present, **our district is a guaranteed school district due to declining enrollment, while increased property valuation from the Rover pipeline which has failed to make its full payment for over 7 years.**

Our **state share resembles a dual-income household: one income is fixed due to the guarantee, unchanged for seven years**, while the **other income relies on property taxes, our only defense against inflation.** *The last property tax increase will yield only about \$1 million until the next evaluation. In FY22, state funding for our school was at 16.7%, projected to drop to 10% in FY26 and FY27???*

If guaranteed funding experiences an additional 5% cut in both FY26 and 27, our district could face a loss of \$750,000. This could result in the elimination of 10+ teaching positions and/or supplemental positions, increasing class sizes and student-to-teacher ratios from 21 to 28 or more. We would have to reduce elective offerings in vital subjects like PLTW, Biomedical, and Band, and cut 1-2 of our 4 counselors, which is concerning given the emotional support needs following the tragic incident in November 2023.

As you engage in discussions regarding the budget proposal, I strongly encourage you to reflect on the pressing issues surrounding public education. This demands substantial investment and is vital for nurturing Ohio's future workforce. **It is crucial to implement the Fair School Funding Plan equitably, while protecting the revenue of guaranteed school districts.**

My 3 requests:

- 1. I request an increase in the guaranteed schools' amounts more than \$20 FY26 and \$30 FY27.**
- 2. Prioritize funding for public education students in this budget.**
- 3. I request that HB 96 be amended to use FY 24 data for inputs to the formula -this will decrease the number of schools on the guarantee and balance the formula as it was intended**

I urge you to consider these critical issues as you discuss the budget proposal. Public education requires significant investment and is

essential for developing Ohio's future workforce. We must advocate for increased budgets for all districts, moving away from outdated educational practices. Our students deserve learning environments that inspire, rather than classrooms reminiscent of the 1970s, characterized by overcrowding and insufficient funding.

Other issues that might be in the Senate proposal that we are concerned about: Enclosed is the information from our treasurer, Mark Phillips, regarding our most critical financial concerns for the upcoming budget. We appreciate the House version that allocates \$20 per student in 2026 and \$30 per student in 2027. Tusky Valley's revenues and our ability to maintain a balanced budget while providing high- quality instruction. Tusky Valley has two main sources of revenue. Those revenues and the components affected by proposed legislation are listed below:

1) State Foundation Funding

☐ *GUARANTEE - maintaining a 100% guarantee in the formula. Tusky Valley benefits from the Rover pipeline, however Rover is only paying 47% of its tax bill. Tusky Valley's Local wealth is measured inclusive of the FULL 100% value of the Rover pipeline, making Tusky Valley appear wealthier and assuming local tax collections are much higher than they are. No funding formula is perfect. Guarantees have always been a part of the formula to protect districts from unintended consequences, such as the Rover example provided.*

2) Local Property Taxes

☐ *20 MILL FLOOR - Changes to current law will result in **decreased tax collections** and **limit/eliminate future growth in tax collections, forcing Tusky Valley to seek new local tax levies more frequently.***

☐ *INSIDE MILLAGE - Changes to current law will **result in decreased tax collections and limit/eliminate future growth in tax collections, forcing Tusky Valley to seek new local tax levies more frequently.***

☐ *30% CASH BALANCE CAP - Implementing the proposal will **result in decreased tax collections, forcing Tusky Valley to seek new local tax levies more frequently.***

□ *CAPPING ANNUAL PROPERTY VALUE INCREASES - Implementing the proposal will **result in decreased tax collections and limit/eliminate future growth in tax collections, forcing Tusky Valley to seek new local tax levies more***

frequently.

□ *HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION & OWNER-OCCUPANCY CREDIT - Changes to*

*current law will result in **decreased tax collections while providing tax relief to***

individuals who most likely need tax relief.

□ *PIPELINE PUPP RATE REDUCTION - Implementing the proposal could **result in***

future decreases in rates to existing pipelines.

□ *ROVER VALUATION APPEAL - The Rover appeal is being heard by the Supreme Court. Finalizing Rover's value at the State Tax Commissioner's value will provide certainty in tax collections for local governments and properly reflect Tusky Valley's local wealth.*

We must champion increased budgets for all districts, stepping away from outdated educational practices that no longer serve our students. Our learners deserve inspiring learning environments, not classrooms reminiscent of the 1970s, plagued by overcrowding and inadequate funding. Investing in education today is not merely a necessity; it is a commitment to building a brighter future for our children and our communities. Our students deserve your best.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your commitment to investing in the future of Ohio's public-school students. Thank you for your willingness to read my written testimony and my concerns for our public schools.

Sincerely,

Sally S. Green, Tusky Valley School Board Member