

Testimony in Support of Fair School Funding

Good afternoon Chair Cirino and Senators of our great state. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Janeece Keyes, and I am the proud single mother of four children who successfully graduated from public schools. As a matter of fact, they all graduated from Columbus City School District. Senator O'Brien, I graduated from Ashtabula High School. I'm here as a parent, and as someone who has lived the reality of what public education can offer – and where it too often falls short because of inequitable funding.

To prove to you the importance of public education, I graduated from high school with two years of Career Tech Education in Office Education. This experience allowed me a high school internship as the evening receptionist at the Adult Education Center at the Ashtabula Joint Vocational School. I have answered the phones, registered adult students, applied payments, scheduled appointments, and performed various administrative tasks. That job was my first job in an administrative role, but I didn't stop there.

Winter of 2006, I graduated from the Ohio State University with my bachelor's degree specializing in Strategic Communication while working full-time job as a lead in an office setting. Spring 2023, I graduated from the Ohio State University with my master's degree in Public Administration and Leadership. Currently, I proudly serve as the Director of Provider Experience for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation. I serve over 60,000 providers throughout the state ensuring they are trained to serve our customers. Why is this important? All of that happened by the opportunities from a great public education where I learned many skillsets.

Do you know what hurts me? Across our great of Ohio, the quality of a child's education is still being determined by a child's zip code, not by their talent, their drive, or their dreams. That must change.

In underfunded schools, we see overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials and equipment, and few support staff to meet the needs of every child. Our teachers are asked to do too much with too little. Our teachers are expected to be counselors and educators to ensure every student gains the knowledge to be successful.

Fair funding isn't about giving every school the same amount; it's about giving every student what they need. As a single mom, I've fought to make sure my children had the opportunities they deserved. I have a child who graduated as Valedictorian and a child who successfully graduated at the end of summer. I've watched how dedicated educators stretch limited resources,

and I know how much more our schools could do with the financial support they need and deserve.

This is more than a funding issue, it's a justice issue. It's about whether we believe every child, regardless of race, income, or neighborhood, deserves a fair shot at success. You represent me and I ask each one of you as Senate Finance Committee members, "Does every child deserve a fair shot at success?"

I ask you to support a funding formula that is equitable, evidence-based, and sustainable for all children. I am not asking for special treatment, I am asking for what our children are rightfully due – fairness. Everyone in this room owes our children an investment in their future.

Thank you for supporting a funding formula that works for Ohio's future ... our children.

Respectfully