

Testimony

Provided to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

INTERESTED PARTY

HB 96: Creates FY 2026-2027 Operating Budget

PROVIDED BY:

**Jessica Drew, Community Member
Talawanda School District, Oxford, Ohio**

Submitted June 3 , 2025

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jessica Drew, and I am a resident of Oxford, Ohio and a proud member of the Talawanda School District community. I am writing today to express my deep concern and strong opposition to House Bill 96, which would abandon the final phases of implementation of the Fair School Funding Plan.

The Fair School Funding Plan was developed through years of bipartisan cooperation, research, and refinement. It represents one of the most comprehensive and equitable approaches to education funding Ohio has ever undertaken. To walk away from it now, as it nears full implementation, is not only short-sighted, it is unconscionable. Doing so would underfund Ohio's public schools by an estimated \$2.75 billion over the next two years, a cost that our children and communities simply cannot afford.

Our district, Talawanda, faces unique and significant funding challenges. Oxford is home to Miami University, a vibrant and vital institution that draws students and educators from around the world. But as a nonprofit, the university pays no property taxes on its vast landholdings. In addition, our district is surrounded by beautiful farmland, which is taxed at a reduced rate under the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) program. These two factors severely constrain our local revenue base, making state funding a critical lifeline for our schools.

The impact of funding shortfalls is already being felt in our district. Our students have faced reductions in busing services and course offerings—cuts that limit their access to education and opportunity. If House Bill 96 passes, we fear these losses will only deepen. How much more must our students lose?

Meanwhile, funding for private school vouchers continues to increase—often at the expense of the very public schools that serve the vast majority of Ohio's children. These voucher programs undermine our public education system and exacerbate educational inequities across the state.

Every Ohio child is constitutionally guaranteed access to a free and appropriate public education. That guarantee cannot be met without adequate and fair funding. I urge you to uphold your commitment to Ohio's students by rejecting House Bill 96 and fully implementing the Fair School Funding Plan as originally designed.

Our children deserve better. Please don't abandon them.

Respectfully,
Jessica Drew
Oxford, Ohio
Talawanda School District Community Member