



# LONDON CITY SCHOOLS

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Senate Finance Committee  
Amended Substitute House Bill 96  
June 4, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Substitute House Bill 96. My name is Kristine Blind, and I serve as the Treasurer/CFO of the London City School District in Madison County.

The London City School District is located approximately 25 miles southwest of Columbus and is part of the Columbus metropolitan area. Although the number of students in the State of Ohio has diminished, London is one of the few districts that are growing. We currently serve 2125 students K-12 and 160 Pre-school aged children.

## **Funding Formula**

This committee has a difficult task, and I am very appreciative of your hard work, dedication and overall support of Ohio's public schools. The Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) emerged as the result of public-school advocacy and support from both sides. It represents the state and local partnership that is necessary to adequately fund and educate most children in Ohio. I am grateful the phase-in of the FSFP has been included in the bill. The formula was designed to be a balance between local taxpayers and the state, and the integrity of the formula is maintained by keeping the local share components and the base cost input updated.

I realize the state has limited resources and cannot fund both the complete phase-in as well as update the base cost components. Therefore, I respectfully request one of these alternatives is considered:

- Delay updating the valuation and income data until the base cost can also be updated. Phase-in the formula fully in this biennium budget.
- Update the base cost input data to be aligned with the valuation and income components. Phase-in the balance of the formula over the next two biennium budgets.

## **County Budget Commission Authority**

I understand the need for property tax relief, especially for those with fixed or low incomes. The improvements made to the property tax exemption are a step in the right direction, as are the provisions in SB 22. Relief, however, should not be decided by County Budget Commissions (CBC's), who are not qualified to evaluate school district

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needs and the complexities of our revenue sources and flows. The current authority to lower bond (debt) millage is very straightforward, as the principal and interest payments are known in advance, for the life of the debt. This is not the case with school district general fund budgets. A County Budget Commission will not know or see the future expenditures I have planned (and perhaps obligated) in the following 18-24 months nor will a CBC understand the need a district has for negotiations occurring several months after the decision to reduce millage has been made, when base wage increases are yet to be determined for the next three years.

### **Five-Year Forecast and Cash Balances**

I firmly believe in and follow best practices when it comes to cash balances. All school districts should have a floor and a ceiling and have concrete plans for funds exceeding their policy. Cash balances for districts on June 30, 2024, are very misleading. ESSER funds expired in September 2024, and many districts were still spending Student Wellness and Success funds that were received in a separate fund and not shown in the general fund. If you look at cash balances in FY25 and FY26, you will see a gradual reduction. If there are districts who are consistently above a reasonable balance, then ODEW should address that specifically.

The Five-Year Forecast will reveal declining balances as well as indicate that many districts are in deficit spending. This is the nature of school funding and demonstrates the need for levy cycles and predictable revenue. I use our forecast as a planning tool, and I rely on it for negotiations and to communicate to my community where we are headed. A Three-Year Forecast is not adequate. It will not enable me to certify a contract longer than three years and does not show the compounding effect of expenditures to enable us to react quickly enough.

While I would love to comment on each bill provision, I will stop here. I thank you for your time and attention to all the opinions coming your way. I appreciate what you do and your service to your communities.

Respectfully,

Kristine Blind, Treasurer/CFO  
London City School District