



Dear Members of the Finance Committee and the esteemed members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today regarding Am. Sub. H.B. No 96. My name is Heather Sharp, and I serve as the Treasurer/CFO of the Lima City School district in Allen County.

The Lima City School district is an urban district serving approximately 3100 students within nine square miles. Our district consists of four elementary schools, two middle schools, two K-8 magnet schools, one high school with a career technical education wing, and one alternative high school. We are 100% economically disadvantaged with 22% of our students having a disability or special need. I appreciate the work of this Committee and the General Assembly in supporting our public schools, and I respectfully offer the following comments on provisions in Am. Sub. H.B. No 96.

Preserve the fair funding formula and update base cost inputs. The Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) is student-centered, transparent, and offers predictability on the cost of educating students in our community. Having a fully phased-in and updated funding model will help our district in long-term financial planning. Base cost inputs need to reflect current costs associated with staffing, class sizes, and services offered. If we do not align funding levels with the actual cost to educate our students, we become imbalanced and we shift the funding burden to our local taxpayers.

I also ask that the Committee remove the Administrator Retirement Provision prohibiting a school board of education from paying employee contributions to SERS or STRS on behalf of the Superintendent and Treasurer. The board is a group of elected officials who have the right to negotiate provisions of a contract between a Treasurer and Superintendent and a board of education. This provision will limit the power of the elected officials while hurting the contracted officials who currently have this in their contracts. Federal law permits employers to pick up employee retirement contributions. I am asking that you keep the law as is, and allow school boards of education to make the decision on whether or not to offer this benefit.

In addition, replacing the five-year forecast with a three-year forecast weakens our ability to plan ahead and monitor emerging deficits. A three-year forecast will make long-range planning difficult when it comes to funding capital projects and collective bargaining negotiations. Requiring a forecast to be completed by August 31st and the last day of February will not show adequate projections. November and May forecasts are quite adequate when projecting and showing the data of the district.

I urge the Senate to:

- Keep the fair funding formula with updated cost inputs
- Remove the Administrator retirement provision.
- Reinstate the five-year forecast requirement to ensure long-term planning and transparency.

Our students deserve a fully funded system that will allow us to provide high-quality education and stability. Thank you for your time and attention.