



June 4, 2025

Sen. Jerry Cirino, Chair
Sen. Paula Hicks-Hudson, Ranking Member
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 96; Ohio's Budget

Dear Senators,

This letter shall serve as official notice of the Youngstown Warren Black Caucus' opposition to HB 96 as it was passed out of the House of Representatives. We believe the bill fails to adequately budget for services desperately needed by Ohioans and especially the education of our children.

We strongly disagree with the level of funding being allocated for Ohio's public schools. During the last 2 budget cycles, members of the General Assembly committed to a Fair School Funding Plan that would adequately finance K through 12 public education, prepare children for higher education, and make Ohio's students competitive in the job market after graduation. In the current proposed budget, funding has not only been drastically reduced, but so is the commitment to giving our children what they need to advance in their adult lives. The current amount of funding proposed for our public schools is \$350 million less than what is needed based on the Plan. And while our public schools will not receive adequate funding, the legislature proposes to give private and charter schools twice the amount of money as public schools. These schools are not held to the same academic standards as public schools and have the freedom to admit, deny, or remove any student they please for any reason they deem appropriate. As you know, when a student goes to a charter school they take those public dollars with them, yet if they are removed from said charter school, the funding does not follow the student back to a public school. There is too much leeway for schools that receive Ed Choice dollars and not enough for public schools that can only receive public dollars. We implore you to fix this problem and give Ohio's public schools the funds they need to survive and thrive.

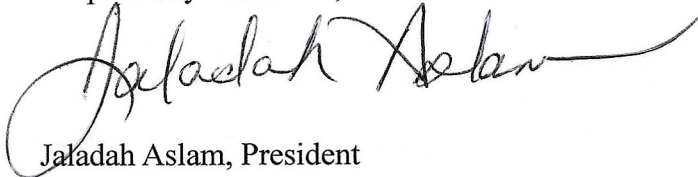
The proposal to eliminate the elected State School Board and replace it with five (5) appointees is a direct attack on democracy and an insult to Ohio voters. The legislature not only wishes to stop funding public education, but it also does not want taxpaying citizens to have any say in what happens to Ohio's children. The fact that it's inside of the budget and not a stand-alone bill proves the devious intent to take rights and input away from voters.

It is not lost on us that while the G.A. claims it cannot afford to fairly fund schools, it is going out of its way to acquire \$600 million in bonds for the billionaire owners of the Cleveland Browns to build a new stadium *outside* the city of Cleveland. How does that benefit children in rural education districts? What does it do for Ohio families? It is truly sad that our elected officials are willing to force taxpayers in Ohio and Cuyahoga County to meet the \$1.2 billion request of a wealthy entity but are not concerned about adequately funding public education.

There are several other items that are extremely problematic in this budget. Failing to honor the Governor's request for a \$1,000 child tax credit and to implement drivers' education back into Ohio's public schools are things that would again make life better for our children and families. The proposal to give those who donate to pregnancy resource centers a \$750 tax deduction simply because the political party in charge agrees with the work of those facilities is not only unfair, but also petty. If that same deduction does not extend equally to those who donate to Planned Parenthood, then it should not be implemented. That act is purely political. Will the next budget give tax breaks to those who vote for the majority party while penalizing those who don't? The legislature is saying in a loud and clear voice that if any Ohio citizen doesn't agree with them on personal, family, and cultural issues, then you will not be treated fairly in this state. This is why children who leave the state after high school graduation do not return. We must be a place that welcomes people of varying beliefs, racial and ethnic backgrounds. If not, we will continue to shrink in population and in stature in our nation.

We request that this letter be entered into the official record as opposition testimony to HB 96 in its current state.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaladah Aslam', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jaladah Aslam, President

YWBC

CC: Ohio Legislative Black Caucus

Rep. Lauren McNally, House District 58

Sen. Al Cutrona, 33rd Senate District