

Testimony for House Bill 96
Senate Finance Committee
June 6, 2025
Abby Buckerfield, Parent

Chair Jerry Cirino, Vice Chair Brian Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Finance Committee of the Ohio Senate:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Abby Buckerfield. I am the proud parent of 3 graduates from Ohio's public high schools, 2 of which have chosen the family business of being educators, an Intervention Specialist with 28 years of classroom and educational leadership experience, and advocate for public education.

As someone who cares deeply about Ohio's public schools, I did hear positives from today's press conference, and appreciate those changes from the House version of the biennial budget. However, I am left feeling frustrated and heartbroken by the misleading presentation stating this version "fully implements the Fair School Funding Plan" while continuing on to say the cost inputs were not being updated, instead continuing to use the costs from 2022. This was further explained to state that there will be districts receiving less money than they did in 2024 because the guarantee has also been eliminated. This is not fully implementing the formula at all, nor fairly funding our public schools. Our students and teachers deserve better—and they've deserved it for a long time.

When schools don't have the resources they need, it affects everything. Teachers take on more with less. Students miss out on learning opportunities. Buildings go without repairs. This isn't about effort—it's about support.

The addition of *performance-based* funding sounds nice, but here's the problem: that kind of system rewards schools for outcomes they often can't control. It creates winners and losers, when all students deserve a fair shot. And, this performance reward is being created off data from when districts are being underfunded, lacking the resources needed for students and teachers to be successful. This seems to only continue to harm students in districts that need the funding the most.

When cost inputs to educate students are not updated to reflect current costs, and performance-based funding is used, the stability that school districts need to plan ahead, support teachers, or invest in long-term improvements does not exist. It punishes schools that need the most help instead of lifting them up. It continues to put the responsibility of funding schools on the local taxpayers because you refuse to do your part in making it a priority to fully fund public schools.

Our public schools aren't failing—they're being failed by a system that's been broken for decades. Even Ohio's own Supreme Court has said our funding model is unconstitutional, and yet here we are—still waiting for real change that truly allows the Fair School Funding Formula to be fully implemented as intended when it was created. A true tax break for Ohioans would be this General Assembly deciding to honestly, fully, and fairly funding Ohio's public schools.

It's time to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan. Our students and teachers need the reliable and equitable support this would provide. Every child, in every zip code, deserves the chance to succeed. I'm looking for you to do the right thing, fund Ohio's public schools by updating the cost inputs to reflect current costs, and add the guarantee back in for those districts who need this, and are planning on this funding based on promises made to fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan in this biennial budget.

Please consider the millions of students who attend and depend upon their public schools. I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony and your time.

Abby Buckerfield, Parent
Delaware City Schools