

House Bill 96
Testimony - Interested Party
Senate Education Committee

Chairman Brenner, Vice- Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 96. The impetus behind my testimony is the fair distribution of Ohio's budget to support **all** of Ohio's students.

My name is Ellen McGrath. I have been an Ohio educator since 1991. I worked as a classroom teacher in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, a reading specialist in Cincinnati Public Schools, and as a certified private Orton-Gillingham tutor. I currently work with students from private and public schools throughout the Cincinnati area.

I want to express my opposition to the decision to dismantle the last phase of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan formulated to address unconstitutional disparities in education funding in Ohio. I disagree with the Senate's decision to give extra money only to the school districts achieving 3 Stars on the state's report cards. **According to experts, socioeconomic factors across the nation are the most powerful indicators of student achievement.** Districts with students from low-income families score lower on standardized achievement tests.

Cincinnati Public Schools raised their report card score to 2.5 stars in 2024 as Ohio's second largest school district with over 35,000 students and 80% of their students coming from economically disadvantaged families. CPS scored 3 stars in gap-closing indicating a focused effort in supporting **all** of their student population.

Absenteeism continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing our low-performing districts. When I was teaching, students would stay home to help parents with younger siblings. These districts need our support.

Cutting funding to our public schools and expanding the voucher system will give taxpayer money to families that are able to afford private school tuition. *"Mom, the biggest difference I've seen in Brennan's (my grandson) school since the income level for vouchers was raised is there are a lot of new expensive cars in the car line."*

Reading disabilities affect one in five (or 20%) of people. Ohio has been serving approximately 16% of students with documented disabilities protected by their Individual Education Plans. These students require individualized instruction with accommodations and modifications in order to succeed in the classroom. Public school leaders have stated cutting funds to public schools will likely result in larger class sizes and a reduction in the number of intervention specialists.

Reducing budget funds to schools would affect entire school communities and beyond. Data shows that **70% of incarcerated individuals struggle to read and 80% are high-school dropouts**. High-school dropouts earn an estimated \$10,000 per year less than graduates.

The human right to a fair and equitable education is at the core of a successful society. With possible cuts to federal programs that provide assistance to those in need, this is a **critical** time to protect ALL of Ohio's students with full completion of the final phase of the FSFP including updated base-cost inputs. Thank you for your time and consideration.