

# Testimony in Opposition of The Ohio Biennial Budget

Respectfully Submitted,  
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Good Afternoon,

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Shuring, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the Finance Committee:

I am Laura Jones, a working mother of two daughters, Sydney, a sixth grader who acts in plays, and Eve, a fourth grader who loves riding her scooter in our cul-de-sac with her friends.

They both attend schools in the Hudson City School District.

I am here because of them - to testify today in opposition to the proposed Biennial Budget, specifically the cuts in State Funding to Hudson City Schools and to many other school districts in Ohio.

I spend a great deal of time volunteering for my children's schools because I value their education. I am a member of the district financial advisory committee, the co-chair of the district volunteer parent program, and an active member of our local PTO.

Through PTO, I am in charge of the Box Tops collection. This means I spend hours cutting out these little slips of paper that earn ten cent rebates from General Mills.

The school principal is so eager for more funds that he promotes this by doing crazy things like getting duct taped to the wall to help earn about \$3000 a year.

Two weekends ago, I was co-chair of our local PTO Pancake Breakfast. I spent months organizing a day where we could flip pancakes for \$8.00 a person to raise \$21,000 for the schools.

If you think the \$1.8 million in cuts you are making don't matter to me, you are wrong. I collect every dime possible to improve my children's schools. I am deeply concerned about Governor Kasich's proposed budget, and how it would hurt our District's 4,617 students and community.

Under the proposal, Hudson stands to lose \$1.8 million over the next two years. I don't know about you, but almost \$2 million dollars is a lot of money to me.

Hudson residents value education and historically support their district, working hard to make it one of best in the state. That tradition of excellence is supported by significant local taxes, funding 70% of the budget.

The new message from Columbus is that Hudson is on its own financially to educate its children. The Hudson School District is one of the highest performing districts in this state. Governor Kasich talks about keeping our own in Ohio to be leaders, entrepreneurs, business owners, doctors, lawyers, teachers...well, that is my dream for my girls, too. My children count, too.

Already, our children receive far less than the state's average per pupil funding, far less dollars for special needs students, and far less dollars for facilities. Enough is enough. I am not asking for more, but I am demanding that we don't receive any less.

Hudson's TPP dwindled to \$1.8 million in 2013 and will be ZERO in 2017 under the Governor's proposed budget.

As you may remember, the Tangible Personal Property tax was a business tax that was removed as part of overall tax reform in 2005 as way to improve the business climate in Ohio. The TPP taxes were local dollars that were paid directly to schools.

To mitigate the severe economic impact for schools in the face of losing those local revenues, the legislature created hold harmless reimbursements, directing state funds to school districts to make up for the business tax breaks. School districts like ours supported positive changes in the taxing structure to help businesses. **However, the intent was never for school districts and residents to have to shoulder the entire responsibility of making up those losses.**

The Governor's new budget clearly shifts previously earmarked school dollars to other funds used to attract businesses. High performing school districts help attract businesses, too.

This budget proposal leaves our district no choice except to pass a large levy, or make significant cuts to programs for my two daughters and other Hudson children. I worked on our last levy campaign and know how hard it is to pass a levy. The last one took three tries and a reduction before passing.

I understand that there are many districts in Ohio that are struggling. I supervise student teachers for two colleges at a variety of schools and I see the differences between them.

The \$700 million increase in the education budget is enough to help struggling schools without taking dollars from high performing districts, like Hudson.

I know you support school choice. I have made a choice to send my children to one of the top public schools in Ohio. I am asking you today to support my choice, too. Are you willing to cut funds to your own children's public schools?

Cutting funding to any of Ohio schools will lead us down a path to mediocrity in education, not down a path to excellence. Again, to quote the Governor, "The fact is, punishing success will drive people out."

I would like to add that I am thankful for the news I have heard this week that you, The Finance Committee, is making changes to the governor's budget by restoring funding to many school districts across the state. Hudson is now losing \$1.8 million, not \$2.9 million. However, this is still too much. As the mother of these two girls, I ask that you keep education strong in Ohio by voting "NO" to any proposal that reduces state funding for Hudson and any other Ohio public school district. Thank you.

Do you have any questions for me?