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Joseph Spiccia

Superintendent

Written Testimony
Before the
Senate Finance Committee
Joseph Spiccia
Superintendent, Wickliffe City School District
June 10, 2015

Chairman Oelslager, and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Joseph Spiccia. I am the Superintendent of the Wickliffe City School District, and I am here to testify on behalf of my school district and as a member district of the Coalition for Fiscal Fairness in Ohio (CFFO).

Wickliffe is a four square mile community serving 1,525 pupils. Approximately 17% of residents have children attending public schools. A majority of the community are senior citizens on fixed incomes. Median income reported as of TY2012 is \$32,595. In 2005 approximately 21% of our students were economically disadvantaged, today nearly 40% percent of Wickliffe students are economically disadvantages; 14% of our students are special needs. The community has authorized 75 mills.

Before House Bill 66, our district received \$2.8 million from Tangible Personal Property Taxes, representing 14% of our total budget. Today, the district receives \$2.1 million, representing 10% of our total budget. Even with the increase of economically disadvantaged families the voters supported an operating levy of 7.9 mills in 2010. Since the passage of that levy, the district has consistently cut \$1,000,000.00 out of its budget as a pledge to the community to keep costs down and continue to provide a quality educational program to our students. Even with the passage of the levy in 2010 and the reductions in expenditures the district has made, we are again faced with having to ask the voters for another operating levy, as early

as 2015 or 2016. Passing an operating levy is difficult in the best of circumstances. However, with the increase of economically disadvantaged students in our district coupled with the possible phase out of the TPP reimbursement, the ability to pass a levy to meet our expenses and make-up for the lost reimbursements may be beyond the means of our voters. Personally and on behalf of the community of Wickliffe, thank you for working on a solution to this issue. Please continue to work with us in finding a permanent solution to the TPP reimbursements.

In closing, the TPP reimbursement represents 10% of our operating budget. Our school district has reduced costs in an effort to live within the budget. The loss of TPP tax reimbursements represents an 8-mill increase to voters. We cannot accept additional cuts in TPP reimbursement; as such reductions would severely impact our educational program. As a small district, we have fewer resources (Human and otherwise) than larger districts and because of that, we have fewer resources to eliminate if the TPP reimbursements are phased out. Our residential and business taxpayers already support our excellent schools. Like you, we are committed to providing all students a rich educational experience and we ask that you assist us in ensuring the educational experience all students receive continues to be a rich one. On behalf of the residents of Wickliffe, I ask you to draft permanent legislation that guarantees voters receipt of TPP tax reimbursements. Thank you for allowing me to address you today.