



Proponent Testimony on HB 1
Presented by Darold Johnson
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Chairs Richardson, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Darold Johnson, Director of Legislative Action for the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts, higher education staff and public employees. OFT supports HB 1. You have heard from those who have developed the formula. Each has adequately explained the different aspects of the Base Cost formula. While no school funding formula is perfect, not having a formula is worse.

Last year, HB 305 passed the House by a vote of 87-9. This year HB 1, the sequel to HB 305, has over 60 co-sponsors. These are positive signs, but the task you have before you is not an academic exercise. The lives of almost 2 million children are in the balance.

The Base Cost formula considers that educating students requires more than books and tests. It requires students to have more access to technology. The current pandemic has only reinforced this point. Also, no matter where they attend school, students have social, emotional needs that impact their ability to succeed. The opioid crisis and the pandemic have exposed this issue. The Base Cost formula includes the wraparound services components as an essential element. Seeing children from a holistic perspective is the best way to ensure that all children succeed.

Another school funding aspect to consider is that the categoricals for economically disadvantaged, special education, and other areas are not included in the chart comparing the Base Cost vs. Current law. The fact that economically disadvantaged funding is increasing and will be reviewed immediately for adequacy should help address the equity issue raised in questioning.

There are several reasons HB 1 needs to pass now:

1. The Governor's FY 2022 -FY 2023 biennium budget leaves the state without a school funding formula. It allocated funding based on FY 2019 attendance creating 610 school districts on a guarantee. If the goal is to have fewer or no school districts on a guarantee, Ohio is going in the wrong direction.
2. The deducts for vouchers have significantly hurt school districts with a majority-minority population and high poverty. In FY 2020, thirty school districts lost at least ten percent of their

net foundation funding because they paid for a voucher for students who had not attended these schools in FY 2019. The impact of deducts has only gotten worse in FY 2021 because of the continued deduction of a charter, voucher, and other payments from their schools.

3. The passage of legislation in the last General Assembly that reduced the number of school buildings eligible for school vouchers will only increase financial stress in majority-minority and high-poverty school districts because of the continued deductions for students who never attended their schools. The only way to reduce the additional financial strain on these school districts is to have the state pay for any deductions. Having the state pay for any deductions provides the public with an accurate picture of where state education dollars go and what a school district receives.

4. The Base Cost formula provides a better reflection of what local school districts can generate at the local level. No longer are property rich and income poor school districts hurt as they were in previous school funding formulas. The formula is also flexible, so when economic conditions change, the formula takes that into account.

Failure to pass this bill will have difficult consequences for the future of Ohio's traditional public schools that educate 90 percent of Ohio's future. It will also put Ohio behind states with fewer students, such as Massachusetts, Maryland, and Arizona, increasing their state's funding for education.

I urge you to pass HB 1, and include in the final budget that the House will pass. I hope you will encourage your Senate colleagues to do likewise. This concludes my testimony. I welcome any questions you may have.