

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 1**

**Ohio House of Representatives  
Finance Subcommittee on  
Primary and Secondary  
Education  
Representative Richardson, Chair**

**Marlon Styles, Superintendent  
Middletown City School District**

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 1. My name is Marlon Styles, proud Superintendent of the Middletown City School District. We are an urban school district with a median household income of \$40,000 and we are 100% Free and Reduced Lunch rate. Our current forecast indicates we will need additional resources as soon as possible or we will face the task of passing a school levy. Considering that the median household income in my district is only \$40,000, I do not want to have to ask our residents to pay more when I know how much they are struggling, especially in the midst of the pandemic. On 11/16/20, our Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution in support of the Fair School Funding Formula and House Bill 305, now HB 1. Signing on to my testimony today are 236 school leaders from southwest Ohio, including superintendents, treasurers/CFO's, board of education members and other school officials. They represent 93 southwest Ohio school districts.

House Bill 1 transparently answers the question: what does it take to educate a child? For the first time, our high poverty students are going to be able to see how much they are getting to be educated. The plan is equitable. Treating each district the same when looking at their property and income wealth makes logical sense to truly identify a community's capacity to pay for the education of its students. And, it's refreshing to see a stable formula that will benefit long-term planning.

I am not here to reiterate the technical information you have already heard. Please refer to the Work Group's testimony for their expert overview. I am here to testify for the students who, year after year, are overlooked and under-supported by our current funding formula. Prior to the current flat funding structure, Middletown CSD was one of the Ohio districts whose funding was capped, and at about 70% or \$14,400,000 short of the formula aid.

The funding structure of public education in Ohio is systemically unjust. According to an analysis by the Alliance for Excellent Education, Black students in Ohio are 8 times more likely to attend an F school than their White peers. Let me tell you the difference between an F school and an A school is not the quality of the students or teachers, it's the resources invested in those students and educators. Many states across this country are taking real action to deliver systemic equity, and I know the leadership in Ohio, at the core, believes in equity for all. The current system is not equitable for Brown, Black, rural, disabled, ESL, and gifted students in this state. As a result...

- It means the student who dreams of being an engineer arrives at school yearning for access to STEAM opportunities that don't exist. Unfair funding hasn't allowed for investments in STEAM resources, including technology. Dreams are crushed.

- It means the district who lacks funds to meet the Gifted Indicator and hire the staff to service the students is frustrated. I won't mention the inequities in the accountability system.
- It means the students with disabilities who look to the school district to provide appropriate Least Restrictive Environment, braille readers, and specially designed curriculum are frustrated at the lack of support and programs. It becomes harmful to students.
- It means the Black student who shows up to school on a daily mission to find inclusive learning environments remains frustrated. Their daily fatigue of trying to access the learning is evident. The unfairly funded district is unable to seek out culturally relevant practices and to recruit teachers of color. Their education should matter.
- It means the Spanish speaking newcomer arrives at school each day frustrated at the lack of opportunities to learn because of the language barrier. Unfair funding has resulted in their district unable to provide adequate ESL supports and programs.
- It means the grandmother of six school-aged children has to fight to make her plea heard for her high poverty, unfairly funded, school district to help provide her grandchildren an education that would break the cycle. She is frustrated.
- It means the dreams for a better education, a fairer education of countless Ohio students, and students across the country, are deferred and left to wither while educators continue to fight for equitable funding. We are frustrated.

Unfairly funded public school districts face the same question annually. Where can we cut costs? Ohio legislators, if you had to make a decision about what to take away from a student because your district continued to be unfairly funded...What would you take away?

- Reduce transportation and require kids to walk?
- Cut staff and increase class sizes?
- Eliminate sports and extracurricular activities?
- Remove School Resource Officers?
- Cut electives and fine art programs?
- Cut the technology that gives them the ability to access the Internet and learn from home?
- Eliminate social emotional resources and support systems?

What if public school districts were fairly funded? Ohio legislators, if you were fairly funded what would you provide students?

- Ensure STEAM experiences in every school?
- Provide equitably integrated technology?
- Increase services for our ESL students?
- Provide quality pre-school?
- Create after school programs?
- Provide access to Social Workers and counselors to support the social emotional needs of your students?

On top of being continually unfairly funded, so many districts in SW Ohio are being crippled by the EdChoice Voucher program. Shame on me if I don't take the time to talk about how this systemically unfair program takes general fund dollars from Ohio's public school districts. Let me be honest, it takes funds from primarily urban districts. 80% of our EdChoice Voucher funds are used to cover the private school tuition costs for white private school students who never step foot in public school systems (232 of Middletown's 290 EdChoice vouchers). In April 2020, MCSD BOE approved \$2 million in reductions because of the financial devastation of EdChoice vouchers. Our current EdChoice voucher deduction is \$1,385,000 and it is estimated to increase by over \$250,000 annually. This is just another systemic equity barrier faced by public school students. Over the past few years, we have been hit hard with EdChoice deductions.

As we return back to fairly funding all public school districts I draw your attention to 2 options. Action in this moment indicates 1 of 2 things for Ohio public school districts and the students they serve:

- Option 1: Ohio is just fine with the current system that creates opportunity gaps and undervalues low-income students and students of color, or
- Option 2: Ohio recognizes that the success of our state depends on the success of ALL of its students. Therefore, we are going to invest in the success of every child, regardless of socio-economic status, skin color, grasp of the language, and/or ability. Opportunities for all.

We hope the Ohio legislators shift away from merely telling our students they matter, to actually showing them they matter by taking action to pass HB 1. Find the courage. Answer the call. Do it for Ohio's youth. I leave you with this: Ohio needs to be intentionally unequal if it wants school districts to produce similar outcomes. Let's start by being fair. Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, the best economic stimulus package is a high quality education. I call on this body to choose option 2. Let's pass the Fair Funding Plan and provide each of our students the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Southwest Ohio school district leaders who have signed on to this testimony:

### **Southwest Region**

Jim Atchley, Superintendent, Ansonia Local Schools

Keith Millard, Superintendent, Batavia Local Schools

Chris Brown, Superintendent, BCESC

David Brannock, Board President, Bethel Tate Local Schools

Karen Royer, CFO, Bethel-Tate Local Schools

Melissa Kircher, Superintendent, Bethel-Tate Local Schools

William Shula, Vice President of School Board, Bethel-Tate Local Schools

Jeff McPheron, Superintendent, Botkins Local

William Garrett, Superintendent, Brown County ESC

Paul Carpenter, Treasurer/CFO, Butler Tech

Dan Bassler, Treasurer, Carlisle Local Schools

Chad Mason, Superintendent, Cedar Cliff Local Schools

Gail Martindale, Board of Education President, Cedar Cliff Local Schools

Joy Kitzmiller, Treasurer, Cedar Cliff Local Schools

Megan Sparks, Board Member, Centerville City Schools

Jennifer Wagner, Treasurer/CFO, Cincinnati Public Schools

Juliana Wallace, Treasurer, Clark County ESC

John Espy, Treasurer/CFO, Clermont Northeastern Local Schools

Carrie Bir, Treasurer, Clinton-Massie Local Schools

Gene Gooding, Superintendent, Covington Exempted Village Schools

Jocelyn Rhynard, Board Member, Dayton City Schools

Jay Phillips, Superintendent, Deer Park Community City Schools

Jeff Parker, Superintendent, Eaton Community Schools

Andrew Wilson, Board Member, Fairborn City Schools

Billy Smith, Superintendent, Fairfield City Schools

Nancy Lane, Treasurer/CFO, Fairfield City Schools

Terri Noe, Superintendent, Finneytown Local Schools

Leslie Rasmussen, Board Member, Forest Hills Local Schools

Michael Sander, Superintendent, Franklin City Schools

Bradley Winterod, Superintendent, Georgetown Exempted Village Schools

Darrell Edwards, Superintendent, Goshen Local Schools

Melissa Daniels, Intervention Specialist, Goshen Local Schools

Todd Shinkle, Treasurer, Goshen Local Schools

Alex Hix, Assistant Treasurer, Graham Local Schools

Kristie Purtee, Treasurer, Graham Local Schools

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Harry Snyder, President/CEO, Great Oaks Career Campuses

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David Deskins, Superintendent, Greene County Career Center/Greene County JVSD

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Jacob McGrath, Treasurer, Greeneview Local Schools

Krista Stump, School Board Member, Greenville City School

Douglas Fries, Superintendent, Greenville City Schools

James Sommer, Board member, Greenville City Schools

Jenna Jurosic, Treasurer, Greenville City Schools

Jason Shaffer, School Board Member, Hardin-Houston Local Schools

Ryan Maier, Superintendent, Hardin-Houston Local Schools

Coleen Reprogle, Treasurer, Indian Lake Local Schools

Robert Underwood, Superintendent, Indian Lake Local Schools

Scott Inskeep, Superintendent, Kettering City Schools

Peggy Phillips, Board Member, Kings Local Schools

Tim Ackermann, Superintendent, Kings Local Schools

Christopher Corcoran, VP, Lakota Local Schools

Jenni Logan, Treasurer/CFO, Lakota Local Schools

Matt Miller, Superintendent, Lakota Local Schools

Kelley Casper, President, Lakota Board of Education, Lakota Local Schools Butler County

Todd Yohey, Superintendent, Lebanon City Schools

Bob Longworth, Superintendent, Lockland Local Schools

Chad Wyen, Superintendent, Mad River Local Schools

Jerry Ellender, Treasurer, Mad River Local Schools

Krista Wagner, Assistant Superintendent, Mad River Local Schools

Emily Hauser, Treasurer, Madeira City Schools

Dan Kaffenbarger, Superintendent, Madison-Champaign ESC

Jonathan Cooper, Superintendent, Mason City Schools

Shaun Bevan, Treasurer/CFO, Mason City Schools

David Larson, Superintendent, Miami County ESC

Ann Niess, School Board, Miamisburg City Schools

Laura Blessing, Superintendent, Miamisburg City Schools

Catherine Mulligan, School Board Member, Middletown City Schools

Cathie Mulligan, School Board member, Middletown City Schools

Marlon Styles, Superintendent, Middletown City Schools

Randy Bertram, Treasurer/CFO, Middletown City Schools

John Spieser, Superintendent, Milford Exempted Village Schools

Kay Altenburger, Treasurer, Milton-Union Exempted Village Schools

Jeff Winchester, Superintendent, Mississinawa Valley Local Schools

Dara Laforest Miller, School Counselor, Monroe Local Schools

Shannon Johnson, Nurse Paraprofessional, Monroe Local School

Amy Conley, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Amy Flora, School Counselor, Monroe Local Schools

Andrea Carovillano, Instructional Technology Coach, Monroe Local Schools

Ashley Boggs, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Ashley Wilson, Kindergarten Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Becky Eschmeyer, teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Bethlea Pieratt, Instructional Coach, Monroe Local Schools

Brad Thorpe, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Brandon Langjahr, Vocal Music Director, Monroe Local Schools

Brenda Milburn, Secretary, Monroe Local Schools

Brittany Grays, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Carol Kelley, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Carrie Long, School Counselor, Monroe Local Schools

Cheryl Keith, Support Staff/ Cafeteria, Monroe Local Schools

Cinda Pelfrey, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Cori Gates, High School Art Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Danielle Leach, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

David Decker, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Dwayne Terry, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Elizabeth Jeffers, Payroll & Benefits specialist, Monroe Local Schools

Elizabeth Rose, RN, Monroe Local Schools

Emily Bauer, Intervention Specialist Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Emily Cutler, Classroom Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

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Hannah Marshall, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Heather deBord, Intervention Specialist, Monroe Local Schools

Holly Cahall, Chief Financial Officer, Monroe Local Schools

Holly Stevens, Media/ office Aide, Monroe Local Schools

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Jennifer Baker, Science Teacher Middle School, Monroe Local Schools

Jennifer Kenneally, 8th Grade Math Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Jennifer Richardson, Intervention Specialist, Monroe Local Schools

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Jody Long, Curriculum Director, Monroe Local Schools

Jon Creamer, Assistant Principal, Monroe Local Schools

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Katelyn Norquist, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

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Kathy Demers, Superintendent, Monroe Local Schools

Katie Hotze, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Katie Zins, Classroom teacher, Monroe Local Schools

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Lisa Swinney, Cafe, Monroe Local Schools

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Melissa Hale, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Melissa Leonard, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

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Michael Stanger, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Mike O'Hara, Parent, Monroe Local Schools

Molli Carter, First grade teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Nancy Stratton, Director of Pupil Personnel, Monroe Local Schools

Patricia Keith, educator, Monroe Local Schools

Patti Horvat, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Patty McIntosh, Lunch Lady, Monroe Local Schools

Roberta Janesch, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Samantha Soete, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Sara Fenton, Preschool Intervention Specialist, Monroe Local Schools

Sara Owens, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools



Sarah Stanger, Intervention Specialist, Monroe Local Schools

Scott Rice, HS Science Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Seth Darrell, PE Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Shannon Kelly, Regular Education Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Stacy Francis, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

Stephanie Anderson, Athletic Trainer, Monroe Local Schools

Stephanie Jenkins, Third Grade Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Tammy Larison, ELA Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Tara Qucsai, Paraprofessional, Monroe Local Schools

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Theresa Morris, teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Tom Burklow, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

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Traci Hines, Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

Tracy Yalich, ELL Teacher, Monroe Local Schools

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Amy M. Wells, CFO/Treasurer, Northwest Local Schools (Hamilton)

Mary Ronan, Superintendent, Norwood City Schools

Janice Hunter, Board of Education member, Oak Hills Local Schools

Kyle Ramey, Superintendent, Oakwood City Schools

Dwayne Thompson, Superintendent, Piqua City Schools

Jeremie Hittle, Treasurer/CFO, Piqua City Schools

Karen Magoteaux, Assistant to the Treasurer, Piqua City Schools

Christine Poetter, Treasurer, Princeton City Schools

Jodi Wright, Payroll Administrator, Princeton City Schools

Michelle Kocar, Dir. Analytics & Strategic Initiatives, Princeton City Schools

Tom Burton, Superintendent, Princeton City Schools

Colette Lewis, Treasurer, Reading Community City Schools

Jason Enix, Superintendent, Reading Community City Schools

James Wilkins II, Superintendent, Ripley Union Lewis Huntington Local Schools

Rebecca Tompkins, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Ross Local Schools

Steve Rose, Superintendent, Russia Local Schools

Bob Humble, Superintendent, Sidney City Schools

Benjamin Kitchen, Treasurer, Southeastern Local Schools

Tatiana Chernovol, teacher, Southwest Local Schools

Larry Hook, Superintendent, Springboro Community City Schools

Terrah Stacy, Treasurer/CFO, Springboro Community City Schools

Robert Hill, Superintendent/CEO, Springfield City

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