

Testimony on HB110 (Appropriations for FY 2022-23 Budget)  
Submitted to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee,  
May 17, 2021  
by Eve McPherson, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Chairman Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Fair School Funding Plan in HB110.

My name is Eve McPherson and I am a parent in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District.

I urge you to include the Fair School Funding Plan in HB110 in the state budget.

Let me explain why.

In my community, Ohio's unconstitutional education funding system has led to a crisis. As a school system in a city with no industry or large corporate businesses, we are faced with frequent school levies in order to maintain the school system. Homeowners pay increasingly high taxes in order to maintain quality schools.

But there's more. Through local tax dollars, we are also forced to unfairly pay for private schools directly from the local school budget. Last year 7.2 million dollars was deducted from our school budget and given to private schools in the area. This was despite the fact that our public-school enrollment figures did not change. We did not lose students. Rather, families moved into the area to take advantage of the vouchers. The current figure is that nearly 94% of the vouchers in our district are going to families who never attended a public school. Families regularly move in from out of state specifically for these vouchers. And because of deduction funding, state aid for the public-school students was nearly halved. Basically, we had the same amount of students, but less money for each one. To make up for that shortfall, last year we had to ask local taxpayers, mostly homeowners, to once again raise taxes on their homes. If it were not for deduction funding from local tax dollars for private school vouchers, our homeowners would not have been faced with yet another levy.

It is also not lost on us that while 85 percent of the students in our schools are Black, 89 percent of private school vouchers in our community are going to white families. Our community's demographics show that residents are 50 percent white and 40 percent Black, yet the public-schools do not reflect the community demographic make-up. Basically, Ohio vouchers are directly funding racial segregation in the CHUH schools. And remember, these mostly white private school students are getting at least twice as much in state aid as the public-school students who are mostly Black. Take a moment to think about the implications of that.

To add insult to injury, according to research published in a national newspaper, *USA Today* (August 19, 2020), voucher students are less proficient on state tests than public school students. In my district, public school students outperformed voucher students by twelve percentage points on state proficiency tests. Yet, public-school students get less state aid. Based on state measures,

students at voucher-accepting schools in my community are at failing schools. Still, those students get more state aid than the public-school students in our district.

This is unfair, unjust, and unconstitutional.

And this is just one problem that I cite as an example. Because of Ohio's unconstitutional funding of schools, myriad problems exist. That's why urban, rural, and suburban school districts support the Fair School Funding Plan in HB110. That's why the House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported it.

Ninety percent of Ohio's students go to public schools. That means that the overwhelming majority of your constituents are public school families.

Serve these public-school family majorities. Public schools are serving their students well. They could do an even better job if they were not undermined by unconstitutional funding in our state.

Public schools serve all students. They are obliged to serve all students. Private schools can pick and choose their students. Private schools can readily dismiss students who don't fit in to their structures. Public schools cannot so readily do this. And for that I am grateful. So, the question is, why are you serving this small self-selected and self-segregated group over the interests of the overwhelming majority?

It is time to constitutionally and fairly fund our schools. The Fair School Funding Plan achieves this goal. It is time to serve the overwhelming majority of your constituents.

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