

Hello Senators,

Thank you for your time and thoughtful dedication to improving school funding in our state. It has been a long time coming. It is very exciting to think that we are getting ready to fix this terribly broken system that has been constitutionally mandated for an overhaul. I am giddy with anticipation. Please don't disappoint me.

My name is Robin Koslen and as you might well guess from looking at me, I no longer have children in K to 12 schools. I am a grandma or Gaga as they refer to me to four amazing, beautiful, smart, kind, creative grandchildren who all attend Canterbury Elementary School in Cleveland Heights. I am also a neighbor to well-deserving smart, capable great kids going to Noble, Monticello and Cleveland Heights University Heights High School also in Cleveland Heights. And I am a retired public school teacher.

Like you, I think my community is pretty amazing and unique. We in the Heights pride ourselves on our racial, economic and religious diversity. We believe that diversity is our strength. If you have never been here, I'd love to take you around so you can eat in our restaurants, buy artisanal breads, check out the amazing houses, neighborhoods and parks. Our libraries are also the best.

There is this one huge drawback to my home though. The most common response when someone tells you they looked at a house here is, "I love Cleveland Heights and University Heights, but the taxes." Even residents will say the same thing. And often they think it is because someone, somewhere, isn't doing right with their tax dollars. That is not the case. In so many ways, we have fallen into a black hole for funding our schools. If we want quality, we have been told to constantly raise our taxes.

Our public school kids are a diverse group. All of the children in the public schools qualify for free lunch because so many of our public school kids qualify. Ten percent of the children attending Noble Road Elementary School come from families that were refugees from Bhutan via Nepal. Many of our kids are in foster care and some of our kids live in huge mansions with families that could choose any private school around but they chose public because it reflects their values. A more homogeneous group of kids might be cheaper to educate but then it would not be Cleveland Heights University Heights.

We here in Cleveland Heights and University Heights have chosen to tax ourselves to the hilt because of the manner Ohio uses to fund its public schools and our own commitment to the children in our community, but we are tired of it. We are tired of there being a cap on funding from the state, so new students do not generate new dollars. We are tired of Edchoice dollars coming from district funds instead of directly from the State (and of course with no cap). We are tired of being looked at as being wealthy while no one looking at the income of our families would ever make that assessment. We are tired having to explain to citizens every three years that our state designed a system where additional funds needed just to keep up with inflation

would be the responsibility of homeowners once again. But mostly we are tired of the inadequate contribution the State of Ohio has made to the public school children of Ohio.

The Fair School Funding Plan addresses so many of the complex issues around school funding and has been well researched. It takes into account both property values and income of the residents of a community. It funds EdChoice vouchers at the state level instead of saddling communities with bills that can leave some communities writing checks to the state. It addresses the true cost of education and provides a framework to share the cost between the community and the state. It pays for state mandates such as busing. This is a plan that has been in the works for three years, is well thought out and researched. It needs passage.

Senators, funding public education fairly is one of your primary constitutional responsibilities. You have the opportunity right now, at long last, to fulfill that responsibility. Please take this opportunity. As Dr. King said, "The time is always right to do what is right."