

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 110, the biennial budget.

I am Karen Mayfield, a Washington Local School Board member. I would give anything to present my testimony in person but, because I am a public school employee and May is a very busy month, I am unable to get away as we “sprint to the finish” of another school year.

I would like to share a little bit about who and what Washington Local School District is: We serve almost 7,000 students and employ 800 teachers and support staff; our community is mainly working class with a free/reduced lunch percentage of almost 50%; last summer, during a worldwide pandemic, we served 1.5 million meals to local families; and we recently celebrated the groundbreaking for two of our oldest elementary schools which will be ready for students in August 2022. We are a district that cares and gives everything we can to support our students and families beyond our school walls.

As a school board member I spend hours reviewing our monthly financial reports and, at each Board meeting, our Board strives to protect and maximize every dollar we receive. Our district’s 25-year veteran school treasurer has repeatedly said, “We don’t have a spending problem; we have a revenue problem.”

Washington Local became a capped district in 2014, and our students have been shortchanged by the State by \$11.1 million. That’s equivalent to not receiving a single penny for nearly 2,000 students each year, for eight years. We have now accumulated a loss of state aid that exceeds \$106 million due to our district being capped.

Since November 2000, our community has passed seven out of eight school levies, but our Board is working diligently to avoid going back to our levy-fatigued voters.

Our Board has looked for ways to increase our revenue while preserving and growing our educational programs without sacrificing quality or staff. We recently approved open enrollment and we created a Foundation in which we can receive donations to support programming. We are doing EVERYTHING we can and now is the time for you to do your part.

I urge you to approve House Bill 110, including The Fair School Funding Plan. This school-funding model is rational, transparent, fair to taxpayers, equitable for children, and sustainable! This Plan was developed by education practitioners and experts who shared their work; sought feedback from public school leaders across the state; and analyzed national research, best practices, and actual Ohio school district spending data. This is a tested and solid recommendation for a school-funding system that meets the needs of all Ohio’s students. The State now has the funding available to make the most positive and historic change for Ohio’s children and education in decades!

Please listen to us - the people who voted for you - the people who have struggled with the current school funding plan for far too long. Please listen to the experts who support this constitutionally sound plan.

The Fair School Funding Plan is:

1. RATIONAL & TRANSPARENT with a base cost that defines the costs for educating a “typical child” in Ohio;
2. FAIR & SUSTAINABLE because the local share is based upon the ability of a school district’s community to generate revenue considering its income level and its property values; and

3. EQUITABLE with categorical aid that addresses the unique needs of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted students, and English learners.

You have an extraordinary opportunity to make history and end decades of unconstitutional school funding. Please support House Bill 110 so we can provide children with extraordinary learning experiences and services; attract and hire the most qualified, dedicated educators; and maintain our facilities for generations to come.

Vote to provide your constituents - Ohio's taxpayers - with the best return on their investment in our communities, provide Ohio's schools with the financial stability they deserve, and help them meet the future needs of Ohio's workforce and economy.

Chair Brenner and members of the committee, thank you for your time and consideration.