

Proponent Testimony Regarding HB 110
Ohio Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on House Bill (HB). I am Dick Smith, Vice President and Legislative Liaison for the Marysville Exempted School District Board of Education. Speaking for the Board, the Citizens of our School District and the Children who attend our school, we urge you to support the Fair School Provisions within HB 110.

We believe that the Fair School Funding Provisions within HB 110 address the long-standing problems and inequities of past funding models. It is a rationally based, understandable, defensible and equitable approach to providing Ohio's children the education they deserve and which the General Assembly has a Constitutional responsibility to fulfill.

The Fair School Funding Provisions (FSFP) have a number of positive qualities for our school district.

1. We will no longer directly fund educational choice options. Currently, we are supposed to receive \$6,020 per student. We actually receive \$4020 per student. Our deduction for every student who attends a alternative school, the state deducts the full \$6020 which means that \$2,000 of local property tax dollars leave our district. The FSFP eliminates this and provides direct state funding to choice schools.
2. We will have a more accurate 5-year forecast. Under the current funding model, Our Treasurer/CFO is forced to make educated guesses as to the level of state financial support in the outlying years of our 5-year forecast. The uncertainty of the 2-year budget cycle coupled with a lack of specific commitment by the Governor and the General Assembly to a funding formula makes financial planning a pure guess. The FSFP helps to eliminate much uncertainty. While the Legislature retains the ability to adjust funding, the Plan represents a commitment to school districts, but more importantly, a commitment to children to provide every student with an equally funded academic opportunity.
3. We will have a more accurate, defensible levy request for our voters. Our district has been careful with our spending, watchful of our financial picture, which has allowed us to go 13 years without a new money operational levy. We believe that we will be able to push our request for additional funds out 2 more years. The FSFP in HB 110 will give us the ability to be more precise in our levy request. Knowing our funding into the future, we will have the ability to explain with greater detail how the additional dollars we require will be spent. This will enhance our accountability to the voters.
4. We need funding tied to the number of students we educate. As a capped district for much of the past 10 or so years, our funding was not connected to how many students we had in our classrooms. If our population grew, our funds remained the same. Under the Fair School Funding Plan in HB 110, we will receive funding for each student enrolled. It will not be tied to programs, number of teachers, not tied to anything other than the student population of our school. We believe this is right and fair.

Other provisions of the Fair School Funding Plan contained in HB 110 offer additional assistance to us in meeting our responsibilities. I will not speak to them at this time.

I anticipate two major questions:

How to pay for this?

How will this help Ohio?

Question 1 – Funding: The past methods to fund schools in Ohio were declared unconstitutional four times. While additional dollars have been allocated to education, the basic flaw, reliance on local property tax, has not been addressed. The Fair School Funding Plan in HB 110 will cost the State more money. It should. Local taxpayers pay enough. Thus, the question becomes two-fold: Does money exist in the current budget? Is there the will to step up and fix the problems of the past? We, Marysville Schools and the voters in our district, hope the answer is yes to both of these questions. Past Legislative contributions to the Rainey Day Fund, elimination of duplication of student mental health and emotional support funds between the Governor’s initiative and this budget will offer some or all of the funds necessary. Any limitations on increases in the budget or other issues are well within the power of the Legislature to address. Be believe this is doable and we urge you to look broadly and long term as evaluate this proposal. The courage to take the first step is always the hardest.

Question 2 – Help Ohio: In Ohio today, there are thousands of unfilled jobs. Business in Union County and Marysville cannot find qualified applicants for the jobs openings they have. Marysville School along with other Ohio Public Schools can supply the necessary workforce if fair and equitable funding supports academic activity. We are and will continue to focus on expanding educational opportunity and adjusting to the constant changing requirements of local business and industry. We need you to help us do that. We need financial stability which the Fair School Funding Plan provides.

Our district sits in the middle of an area experiencing a technology explosion. Automatous vehicles, computer applications and research and development are the focus of much of the industry in our community. The Transportation Research Center, The Route 33 Corridor run through the heart of our district. We hear all the time how we need to become a “World Class Center of Industry”. That cannot happen without a competitive world class educational system. To meet this challenge, Marysville Schools has evolved to become a leader in Personalized Education. We are on the cutting edge of educational development. We believe that every child can learn. Further, we believe that every school can transform itself into a school of tomorrow. Addressing the school funding issue by passing HB 110 with the provisions of the Fair School Funding Plan will allow this to happen.

Please, for the sake of our children, stabilize school funding.

Respectfully,

Dick Smith

Marysville Schools Board of Education

School Board Vice President

Legislative Liaison