

Thursday, May 6, 2021

Primary and Secondary Education Committee
1:00 PM

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Minority member Fedor, members of the senate education committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Terry Armstrong and I am the Treasurer of Boardman Local Schools in Mahoning County.

I am a life-long resident of Ohio. I have lived my entire life in the Mahoning Valley. I got to live my dream of becoming a teacher and like Representative Patterson my students shaped me and made me a better teacher and person. The approach we used in the classroom was that democracy is a verb. When an issue is important to you and your community you engage with your government, and that is why I am here today.

Similar to the rest of Ohio, school districts in the Mahoning Valley have been victims of a school funding system that is inherently flawed and unfair to our students, staff and our taxpayers. A brief history on how this flawed school funding system has impacted Boardman.

In 2000's the State of Ohio eliminated the locally generated Tangible Personal Property tax. The state committed to reimburse districts for their losses as the intent was not to hurt schools but to help the business environment in Ohio. Unfortunately for Boardman and other impacted districts the reimbursements were phased out and resulted in Boardman Schools losing over \$2 million dollars annually while the Commercial Activity tax that was created to help fund these reimbursements generated nearly \$2 billion dollars as recently as fiscal year 2019.

To make matters worse for Boardman Schools the current funding system in place is based on the most recent formula that results in over 80% of districts being funded outside of the formula with many having their funding capped. Boardman Schools loses over \$3 million dollars per year due to the cap. Collectively our students, families and taxpayers lose over \$5 million dollars per year in funding due to removing the TPP reimbursement and a broken funding system.

One of the major components of the Fair School Funding plan that results in a much fairer and equitable system for schools is that it is not over-reliant on property valuation. Income levels in our community are 23% lower than the state average, our unemployment rate is higher than the rest of the state and nearly half of our students are eligible for the federal school lunch program. These are not the hallmarks of a rich school district that are often associated with the funding cap.

The Ohio Department of Education annually provides a list of similar districts. I have included for your review a chart that shows ten school districts in Ohio most similar to Boardman Local Schools. This chart demonstrates the impact the current funding system has on Boardman Schools. You will see while Boardman receives \$2,500.00 per student that all but one peer district gets more than Boardman and some double. Compound this by the fact that if that same student leaves Boardman for a charter school or for open enrollment that school gets \$6,020.00 for that same student and it is deducted from our district funds. The Fair School Funding Plan funds all students directly and no longer deducts from districts.

The unfairness of the current funding system is not unique to Boardman. I had the honor of serving Lordstown Local schools in the Mahoning Valley for six years as Superintendent. Lordstown also was the victim of millions of dollars in losses of TPP revenue and lost nearly 50% of their state funding due to the cap. The school district I live in, Howland Local Schools, also saw millions of dollars of losses in TPP revenue and also loses millions of dollars due to the cap. Resident income levels in these districts are close to 20% lower than the median household income in Ohio and have faced major job losses including the closing of General Motors Lordstown.

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Minority member Fedor and members of the committee by any measurement the current funding system is broke. It is unfair to taxpayers, it is unfair to the hardworking teachers and support staffs across the state and most of all it is unfair to our students. The time is now. You have in front of you a plan that has been worked on for nearly four

years, is based on what it cost to educate a student, is transparent, and does not over-rely on property values. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

District	County	Enrollment	Median Adjusted Gross Income	Economically Disadvantaged Percentage	Foundation Formula Funding Plus Additional Aid Items	Per Pupil Funding
Boardman Local	Mahoning	4044	\$ 38,955.00	42.2	\$10,215,078	\$2,525
Findlay City	Hancock	5469	\$ 38,729.00	37.9	\$24,507,516	\$4,481
Plain Local	Stark	6061	\$ 41,090.00	42.4	\$26,087,076	\$4,304
Springfield Local	Lucas	3509	\$ 43,427.00	42.8	\$ 9,558,812	\$2,742
Miamisburg City	Montgomery	5093	\$ 44,349.00	40.3	\$17,494,515	\$3,435
Austintown Local	Mahoning	4437	\$ 36,551.00	51.9	\$22,085,599	\$5,158
Cuyahoga Falls City	Summit	4490	\$ 40,207.00	48.3	\$16,308,640	\$3,632
Wooster City	Wayne	3429	\$ 39,349.00	43.7	\$11,720,867	\$3,418
Delaware City	Delaware	5584	\$ 44,505.00	32.9	\$18,698,935	\$3,348
North Olmstead City	Cuyahoga	3714	\$ 44,879.00	38.6	\$ 9,152,527	\$2,464
Troy City	Miami	4066	\$ 43,595.00	34.3	\$16,894,866	\$4,155