



BATAVIA LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

House Bill 110
Proponent Testimony
Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
May 4, 2021

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today as a proponent of HB 110 and the Fair School Funding Plan. My name is Keith Millard, and I serve as the superintendent of Batavia Local Schools in southwest Ohio.

At the onset of the Cupp-Patterson workgroup initiative, the Batavia Local School District ranked as the 23rd highest capped district in the state in the amount of funding lost per pupil due to the cap. Using fiscal year 2019 data from the school funding summary worksheet report, Batavia received over 3.1 million dollars less in funding due to the cap. As school districts were flat funded in the most recent biennium budget, the difference between what Batavia should have received according to the formula and our actual state aid has reached almost 9.5 million dollars in the most recent three fiscal years. Based on Batavia's valuation, it would take a tax levy of over 11 mils just to make up this annual shortfall.

Arguing from a narrow perspective, my advocacy as superintendent makes sense given the financial burden Batavia has incurred due to the cap, and the impact the lack of funding has had on the available programming and materials I can provide to my students and staff when compared to districts in my county, none of whom are impacted by the cap. A fully funded formula would certainly take care of the issues facing Batavia.

What I would like to share however, is not just about Batavia, but rather about the moral imperative of investing in K-12 education relative to the expectations that have been placed on the K-12 educational system.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed, K-12 institutions have become the nexus and connective tissue that links communities to services, especially during moments of crisis. During the early days of the pandemic, public schools fed students, connected families to community resources, provided internet access, made home visits to check on vulnerable

students, and created, to the greatest degree possible, a sense of normalcy for students and families in a very uncertain time.

While members of this committee have no doubt heard testimony regarding the merits of the Fair School Funding Plan, the bi-partisan support it received in the House, and the multi-year inclusive process that went into its development, I understand that there are now questions being raised in the Senate regarding the affordability of the plan and where the money will come from. Though this is a reasonable question to ask, I would urge this committee and members of the Senate to consider what is being asked of K-12 education, and reflect on where the highest impact for State funds lies.

In order to continue to effectively meet the needs of students and families who face increasingly complex challenges, resources are required. The flat funding from the last biennium, coupled with the limits placed on how school districts were able to spend wellness and success dollars, hinders school districts' abilities to direct resources to the areas of highest need within individual school communities. Providing for students who experience homelessness, have difficulties reading, face food insecurity, deal with trauma and mental health issues, along with preparing students for a future of work that is rapidly evolving, requires a school funding system that to the greatest extent possible, captures the cost of educating and meeting the needs of students.

The Fair School Funding Plan has thoroughly investigated and defined what it takes to educate the whole child, and implementation of this plan will provide the most equitable playing field we have seen in Ohio to allow public schools to fulfill the new mission that has been established through service expectations created by the state, as well as our local communities.

At the end of the day, the State revenue being considered is all generated from local sources, and at the heart of the local source is the K-12 school district that serves each locality. The question should not be, "How will the Fair School Funding Plan be paid for?", but rather, "To what effect disinvestment in the plan negatively impacts communities from which tax dollars are derived?"

Chairman Brenner and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for your important work on the FY22-23 budget, and for consideration of keeping the Fair School Funding Plan included by the House as part of the overall biennium budget. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.