

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the Fair School Funding Plan, as introduced to the House as House Bill 100. My name is Jocelyn Rhynard and I am a board member of the Dayton City Schools Board of Education, and I have four children who attend Dayton Public Schools.

The Dayton Board of Education thanks this committee for your continued work and bipartisan support of fixing the school funding formula in Ohio. We recognize that Ohio has made many adjustments to the school funding formula since the DeRolph decision 24 years ago, but we support a permanent change so that the issue of a constitutional funding formula can be laid to rest.

Even before this last year, when COVID threw every single school district into survival mode, the need for fixing the funding formula was clear. The current method of overreliance on local property taxes disproportionately hits urban and rural districts harder and lacks the ability to establish a base cost for educating each child in order to adequately and fairly distribute foundation money throughout the state.

The Fair School Funding Plan establishes this base cost with clear designations for direct classroom instruction, instructional and student supports, building leadership, and district leadership and accountability. The state and local share is clearly defined, with the ability to target districts with additional needs. The transparency of the Fair School Funding Plan and the flexibility afforded under it is a win for districts and students in Ohio.

The Dayton Board of Education supports the Fair School Funding Plan, as introduced to the House as House Bill 110, with an exception, and we look forward to working with and supporting the committee as they continue to hear testimony and improve education funding in Ohio.

I would like to speak to the transportation portion of the bill.

Dayton has a large number of non-DPS schools. On top of the 27 different schools that we transport students to and from every day, we follow the mandate to also transport students to the 29 total charters and parochial schools. With 183 buses, 132 drivers, we transport 3656 non-DPS K-8 students as well as 5260 DPS K-8 students every day. This has continued to be an ongoing issue that causes a large amount of stress not just for our operations department, but for parents and students as well.

In order to transport all of our students and private and charter students, DPS currently has three different start times for our schools and in previous years had as many as four. Some schools have to start quite early, and the others start late and as a consequence have to end fairly late in the day as well. Field trips are not possible for our students because of the limited amount of time between the late start of the day for some schools and the earlier dismissal for others. This robs our students of the opportunity to have experiences outside of their classrooms, something that they may have less access to to begin with because of their limited financial opportunities at home.

As of this year, we are not transporting high school students, but in previous years we contracted with the RTA for Limited Service buses, specifically designated for high school students only.

One of the choices Dayton was weighing was to extend the same Limited Service bus line to the private and charter schools, so that we could free up our yellow buses for Dayton students. The plan would be the same for what we provided for our high school students; have a specially designated bus and route, not open to the public. We would provide Security Resource Officers from DPS as needed if parents were concerned about safety as well. It was not, as many parents incorrectly understood, just simply putting elementary students on regular RTA buses and routes. The proposed transportation restriction in House Bill 110 would continue to put an undue burden on districts already hit hard by yellow bus and driver shortages and we would be unable to consistently transport all students in Dayton, not just students who attend Dayton Public Schools. Using public transportation, with measures put in place to ensure student safety, should remain an option for all of our districts.

Chair Brenner, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 110 and Dayton looks forward to working with the General Assembly as this bill moves through the legislative process. I am happy to answer any questions Committee Members have at this time.