



**House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education  
HB 33 Written Testimony**

**Springfield City School District, Clark County  
Robert F. Hill, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer & Superintendent**

**March 23, 2023**

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on House Bill (HB) 33.

My name is Robert Hill and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent for the Springfield City School District in Clark County. In my twenty-six years in education, I have also served as a high school social studies teacher, coach, assistant high school principal, and high school principal.

The Springfield City School District is in Springfield, considered a legacy city and currently the 12<sup>th</sup> largest city in Ohio. The District, which is the 32<sup>nd</sup> largest in Ohio, serves approximately 7,300 students across sixteen buildings and is the most diverse and welcoming school district in Clark County with a racial overview including student sub-groups of approximately 46% White, 27% Black, 15% Multiracial, 11% Hispanic, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander. We are part of the Federal Community Eligibility Program and considered to be 100% economically disadvantaged, which allows us to provide no-cost breakfast and lunch to ALL students. In addition and of note, the District offers free preschool to ALL students and typically serves over 500 students each school year, which is absolutely necessary due to our extreme levels of poverty, to ensure that our students begin school on somewhat equal footing. Unfortunately, our early learning program is not fully-funded by the state, so every dollar of funding that we receive has an impact.

Due to the adverse societal conditions that exist in our city, our students struggle to meet performance standards. However, our team has created multiple systems to support the well-being of our students and staff, as well as foster the appropriate academic environment and culture that will lead to our mission of student growth and success.

In supporting this mission and during my eight-year tenure in Springfield, our residents have dependably passed three levy renewals, converting one 10.61 mil emergency operating levy to a continuous substitute levy. It is important to note that February 2006 is the last new operating tax levy passed in the District. This is important because due to low property valuations associated with a legacy city, one-mil in Springfield only raises \$78.00 per student, as compared to neighboring districts of similar size raising well over \$250.00 per pupil.

In a community that relies on the support of the state to provide 76% of our funding to serve a diverse and impoverished population, the Fair School Funding Plan is a bipartisan solution to school funding that draws upon

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the expertise of practitioners, as well as other invested parties from within the field of education and our communities. The formula provides the necessary inputs to meet the needs of urban students who have been overlooked since and well-before the *DeRolph* litigation.

I provide written testimony today to ask the Ohio Legislature to approve the funding formula that is currently in HB 33. The formula provides the consistency and predictability necessary to support our systems that lead to improved student outcomes.

With the current phase-in, Springfield is receiving 1/3 of the state’s share of the base cost for our students. That means that the local taxpayers are expected to pay the remainder of the state share, which is problematic in a legacy city that receives 76% of our funding from the state due to extreme levels of poverty and desperately low property values. To illustrate this point, consider that our property value rose by 25% this past year, which resulted in a dismal increase of \$500,000 to a \$150 million budget.

As the District continues to improve systems to address learning issues associated with poverty and the pandemic, the Fair School Funding Plan provided additional resources with the phase in of the formula. Across the state and as noted in previous testimony, the formula allowed for growth in revenue, beyond the base year of FY21, of 14% in FY22, and continued phase in of approximately 33% in FY23. Springfield fully supports the continued phase-in over the next four years until full funding is achieved.

Figure 1 shows per pupil funding growth since the 2020-21 school year—note that this formula funding does not include preschool or special education transportation:

### SCSD Per Pupil Funding By School Year

Figure 1

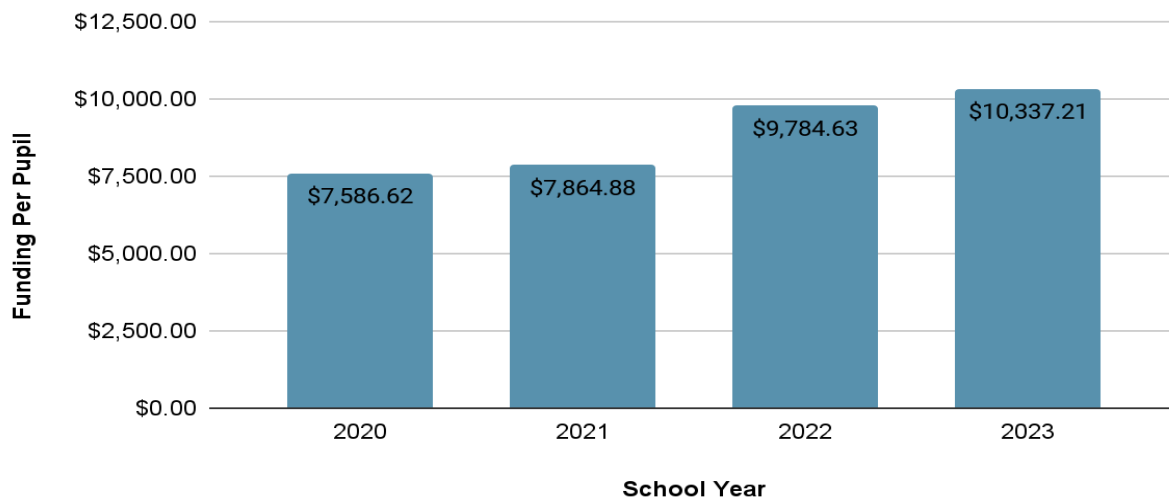
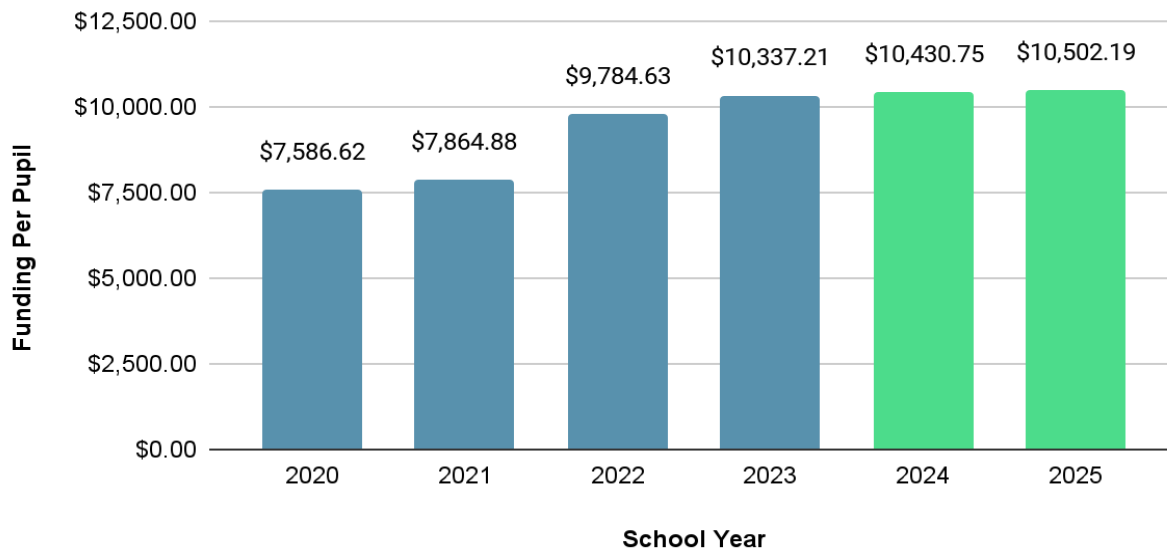


Figure 2 shows per pupil funding with the projected funding phase-ins for FY24 and FY25 (50% and 66.67%, respectively, and net of preschool funding and special education transportation;):

## SCSD Per Pupil Funding By School Year

Figure 2



As illustrated, the provisions of HB33 work favorably for our District and for students who function in the trials and tribulations associated with a high-poverty urban environment. The Springfield City School District supports the Fair School Funding Plan because it clearly outlines an approach for funding the cost of educating Ohio’s children. In our District this means that we can continue to address the Challenges related to the pandemic that still impact school performance as outlined in the Ohio Department of Education Data Insights on the 2021-2022 School Year.

In addition, it is important to note that additional levels of funding associated with the Fair School Funding Plan will help support the systems that the District created to address staff attendance, teacher turnover and student attendance, which impact student performance in not only Springfield, but all urban districts across the nation.

Further, the additional funds will support our systems to improve student executive function skills, defined as the attention-regulation skills that make it possible to sustain attention, keep goals and information in mind, refrain from responding immediately, resist distraction, tolerate frustration, consider the consequences of different behaviors, reflect on past experiences, and plan. A student’s ability to demonstrate high levels of executive function significantly impacts academic performance and the lingering effects of school closures during the pandemic have negatively impacted students’ ability to demonstrate executive functioning skills across the nation by taking away the opportunity to apply these skills daily in a structured setting with clear and consistent expectations.



As noted in previous testimony, the District supports the following provisions of the Fair School Funding Plan as being supportive of both Springfield and Ohio schools in general, as implemented by HB33:

- Require the use of FY22 statewide average base cost per pupil in FY24 and FY25.
- Require the use of FY22 statewide average career-technical base cost per pupil in FY24 and FY25.
- Increase the general phase-in and disadvantaged pupil impact aid phase-in percentages from 33.33% in FY23 to 50% in FY24 and 66.67% in FY25.
- Increase the minimum transportation state share percentage from 33.33% in FY23 to 37.5% in FY24 and 41.67% in FY25.
- Increase the career awareness and exploration per pupil amount from \$5 in FY23 to \$7.50 in FY24 and \$10 in FY25.
- Increase the gifted professional development per pupil amount from \$14 in FY23 to \$21 in FY24 and \$28 in FY25.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the increase in per pupil revenue is minimal in FY24 and FY25. This is in part due to the use of aggregate base costs that are *approximately five fiscal years in arrears*, which is problematic and does not take into consideration the significant levels of inflation since the pandemic.

Therefore, to be consistent with ORC 3317.018 and the use of the FY22 statewide average base cost in other sections of law, it is important to consider an amendment to the Fair School Funding Plan to use data from FY22 to calculate a district's aggregate base costs.

As the leader of the Springfield City School District, I would be remiss if I did not note the tireless efforts of our dedicated, high-quality professional staff. The efforts of our certified and classified teams to meet the basic needs of our students who have experienced multiple traumas throughout their lives and who are subject to extreme poverty and daily violence, are nothing short of amazing. Without full funding, our ability to serve students who often start school many years behind grade-level is hindered. The cycle of poverty must be broken through public education and I implore the legislature to provide our students with the opportunities and skills to not only revitalize our city, but to help solve the societal ills and job shortages across this great state and nation.

Chair Richardson and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read our written testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Hill'.

Robert F. Hill, Ed.D.  
Chief Executive Officer &  
Superintendent of Schools