



EASTERN ELEMENTARY-MIDDLE SCHOOL
38850 STATE ROUTE 7, REEDSVILLE, OH 45772
WHERE EAGLES LEARN TO SOAR!

November 16, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you today as an elementary school principal and a board member on the Appalachian Children Coalition, in support of HB 305, the “Fair School Funding Plan.” During my twelve years as an educator in Southeast Ohio, I have watched in frustration as funding has been stripped from our schools, with an expectation that my local community comes up with the dollars to replace those funds. I am here to tell you that this is simply not possible, nor has it ever been possible.

Meigs County is one of the poorest counties in the state of Ohio. Our population density is low, our tax valuation is low; yet our residents earn low to moderate income. These factors contribute to our lack of funding in the current model and funding formula. When considering the Base Count Cost breakdown in funding, a small district such as ours experiences extreme limitations in offering adequate content (let alone enriched content) to our Middle School and High School students. Additionally, our transportation efficiency numbers don’t meet the requirements because our population density is low per square mile. In our 116 square mile District, we have approximately 400 students who ride the bus. Students are on the bus for approximately an hour both in the morning and at night. As you can imagine, also, driving buses on these rural roads cause wear and tear exponentially greater than buses that are driving on city streets. Although we face all of these challenges, HB305 seems that it will take a step in the right direction to bring some support to rural schools.

Students who attend my school, Eastern Local Elementary, face some of the toughest challenges at home that any child will face as they grow up. I feel so deeply for these kids, and my mission is to give them the strongest support systems possible, while they are at school, so that they can grow into happy and productive citizens. Our school does this in numerous ways: Eagle Pack Food program are food packs sent home once a month to help families in need; free shoe cards funded by a local bank that are available whenever a family needs them; free holiday meals funded through private donations and local churches; after school tutoring for the most struggling students--but we can’t fund it as a broad or sustained program; Angel Tree holiday gift giving for needy families.

As you can see from the list of programs that we offer our children and families in need, we have strong community support; however in small communities, the same contributors often become overburdened with giving. One of the limiting factors that keeps me from providing stronger academic support systems for all of my students is our school budget. It is critical, more now than ever before, that we are providing quality, consistent, and intensive support for our students. School programming providing academic support, transportation for this additional academic support, and adequate staffing to provide

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ALL children in Ohio with rigorous, supportive and enriching academic experiences should be of highest priority to all leaders in our great State.

My support for this legislation is not only rooted in the simple concept of more dollars for schools, but in the equitable distribution of those dollars. For over two decades, Ohio has been inactive in addressing the basic structural flaws in our school funding model. An overreliance on property tax value and community wealth has resulted in a state-wide education formula that is difficult to understand at best, and allows rich areas to provide better education for their kids than communities like my own. I believe that separating our school funding model from the wealth of the local district is not only smart from a funding standpoint, but is the morally correct approach to providing education to children. Every child, no matter where they are born, deserves an equal opportunity at success.

Few things are more important to me than making sure that every Appalachian child has the resources that they need to thrive. And nothing should be more important to our elected officials than making sure that every child in Ohio receives equal access to education. This plan for school funding is a major step towards achieving that goal, and I implore you to support making these changes with all haste.

Sincerely,

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Elementary Principal
Eastern Local Elementary

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