



**Proponent Testimony on HB 305  
Presented by Melissa Cropper  
President, Ohio Federation of Teachers  
House Finance Committee  
December 2, 2020**

Co-chairs Oelslager, Callendar, vice-chair Scherer and ranking member Cera and committee members, my name is Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers. OFT represents teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts and public employees across the state. I am here in support of HB 305.

You have heard from those who have developed the formula. Each has adequately explained the different aspects of the Base Cost formula. While no school funding formula is perfect, not having a formula is worse.

The Base Cost formula considers that educating students requires more than books and tests. It requires students to have more access to technology. The current pandemic has only reinforced this point. In addition, students no matter where they attend school, have social emotional needs that impact their ability to succeed. The opioid crisis and the pandemic have exposed this issue. The Base Cost formula includes the wraparound services components as an essential element. Seeing children from a holistic perspective is the best way to ensure that all children succeed.

Another school funding aspect to consider is that the categoricals for economically disadvantaged, special education, and other areas are not included in the chart comparing the Base Cost vs. Current law. The fact that economically disadvantaged funding is increasing and will be reviewed immediately for adequacy should help address the equity issue raised in questioning.

There are several reasons Substitute HB 305 needs to pass now:

1. The FY 2020 -FY 2021 biennium budget the legislature passed left the state without a school funding formula. It allocated funding based on FY 2019 attendance creating 610 school districts on a guarantee. If the goal is to have fewer or no school districts on a guarantee, Ohio is going in the wrong direction.

2. The deducts for vouchers have significantly hurt school districts with a majority-minority population and high poverty. In FY 2020, thirty school districts lost at least ten percent of their net foundation funding because they paid for a voucher for students who had not attended these schools in FY 2019. The impact of deducts has only gotten worse in FY 2021 because of the continued deduction of charter, voucher, and other payments from their schools.
3. The recent passage of the Conference Report on SB 89 has created another reason to pass HB 305. SB 89 will only increase financial stress in majority-minority and high poverty school districts because of the continued deductions for students who never attended their schools. The only way to reduce the additional financial strain on these school districts is to have the state pay for any deductions. Having the state pay for any deductions provides the public with an accurate picture of how state dollars are used and what the school district receives.
4. The Base Cost formula provides a better reflection of what local school districts can generate at the local level. No longer are property rich and income poor school districts hurt as they were in previous school funding formulas. The formula is also flexible, so when economic conditions change, the formula takes that into account.

Failure to pass this bill will have difficult consequences for the future of Ohio's traditional public schools that educate 90 percent of Ohio's future. It will also put Ohio behind states with fewer students, such as Massachusetts, Maryland, and Arizona who are increasing their state's funding for education.

I urge you to pass HB 305, and I hope you will encourage your Senate colleagues to do likewise. This concludes my testimony. I welcome any questions you may have.