

## **Testimony on Ohio Substitute HB 305 Submitted to the Ohio House Finance Committee, December 1, 2020**

by Krissy Dietrich Gallagher, 2612 Wellington Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Representative Oselager and fellow members of the House of Representatives, I am writing to commend you on taking up Substitute House Bill 305, the Fair School Funding Bill. Successful passage and implementation of this bill is urgently needed in communities like Cleveland Heights-University Heights where I live, volunteer and send my children to public school.

Our district relies disproportionately on residential property taxes for funding because, as a tightly packed inner-ring suburb, we have little commercial tax base upon which to rely. The heavy burden on homeowners has made our community a tough sell to potential homebuyers despite the many other unique benefits we offer. The toll taken by frequent levies has reached a breaking point.

I've been volunteering to pass CH-UH school levies and bond issues for nearly 15 years, working on my first campaign when my eldest son was still in preschool. Most recently, I chaired back-to-back levies in 2020, one in the Primary Election that lost by 700 votes and one in the General that won by 135 votes, a mere 0.46% of votes cast.

Our committee raised nearly \$120,000 to run these two campaigns. We spent countless hours working to convince voters, we engaged hundreds if not thousands of volunteers over the past 11 months. And I think that's a waste ... a waste of finances, a waste of human capital, a waste of passion and energy and ideas. Just imagine what we could have accomplished in our schools if we had spent that money, time, energy and passion working with our students instead? What if the hundreds of community residents who went door to door dropping literature instead used those three or four hours to read aloud with students? What if the dozens of committee chairs who came up with creative ways to connect with voters during a pandemic instead came up with creative ways to connect with students during a pandemic? What if the money we raised was used on home libraries and special programming instead of yard signs and mailers?

Of course, \$120,000 is negligible compared to the \$5M this levy will generate each year. But that money was raised from small community donors: parents and grandparents, alumni and teachers. What if that money was distributed among the PTAs of our eleven school buildings so they could bring in guest speakers and artists-in-residence or offer after-school programming and lessons? That amount of money would be transformational, both for those PTAs, and especially for the students and families they serve.

Instead, we are forced to engage in a brutal and expensive public battle every few years just to secure the most basic funding necessary to educate our community's children. We are forced to do this by a funding system that is inherently broken. It is unconstitutional, unsustainable and unfair. We NEED the General Assembly to fix this. Our schools, which are far from "failing," are forced to give away nearly 45% of the dollars we receive from the State of Ohio to EdChoice vouchers. This is bleeding our district dry.

Let us use our resources, both those allotted to our students from the State as well as those voluntarily given by our residents and supporters, to the benefit of our schools and the children they serve. Anything else is unconscionable and a complete abdication of your duty to provide the students of Ohio with a fair and equitable education.

I beg you to pass, fully fund and fully implement Substitute House Bill 305/Senate Bill 376.  
Thank you.