

**Senate Finance Committee
HB33 Testimony**

**Tuscarawas Valley Local School District, Tuscarawas and Stark County
Sally S. Green, School Board Member**

May 31, 2023

HB33 Budget Bill Impact on Public Education

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony today on House Bill (HB) 33.

As the Senate legislature reviews and prepares to vote on the HB33 budget bill, it is crucial to fully understand its potential impact on public education. Funding is a crucial determinant of education quality, as it shapes every aspect of the educational experience from classroom resources to curriculum and instructors. The bill includes several items that could further negatively impact public education. Legislators must carefully consider the potential consequences of proposed changes to public education funding and strive for investments in students' education. Please review the below information and how each item will impact public schools and my school district.

1. **School funding-** The House as advocated to update the base cost inputs at FY22 levels. This is a necessity to provide fair and accurate costs. FY18 costs inputs are outdated and disadvantageous when the other areas in the Fair School Funding Plan are evaluated at FY22 levels. Public education educates 90% of the students in Ohio. We need to invest in the formula that will support their education to meet the growing needs of our state's workforce. They are the main pipeline to prepare future leaders and our future workforce.
2. **Economically Disadvantaged Student's Cost Study-** The House has recognized the value that a comprehensive study is needed to determine the cost to educate these vulnerable students. This must remain in the bill. It has been stated that 50% of the students are economically disadvantaged in Ohio. While my school district is closer to 30%, we recognize and comprehend how the lack of home resources effects their education opportunities. They must be allotted extra resources that they need to help them improve academically. Many of these students lack food, clothing, and the basics. Often, their vocabulary skills are decreased, and they lack basic reading skills when they come to us. Many of our older students provide childcare for younger siblings, work, or lack internet ability or lack time to do homework. We have instituted additional group and one-to-one time to help each student attain proficient skills in all aspects of learning, but this takes additional resources and costs that is not taken into consideration by the state. It is imperative to provide a study to ascertain the costs that is needed for these students. This does not even address the IDEA students who astronomically costs thousands of dollars to our school district. To provide all the additional skills and supports that must be used in their education is expensive. These costs must be addressed for quality education and relieve the burden that is being erroneously placed on our community.
3. **Transportation Funding-** The House changed and requires the ODE to determine penalties for noncompliance based on the number of students affected rather than the total daily transportation payment amount. While our school has not incurred penalties yet, we are a small school with 95 square miles coverage in our school district. We have a 9-bus fleet and due to bussing shortages,

we request more understanding and grace in this matter. Bussing shortages, weather, road conditions should be taken into consideration. All schools are facing bussing shortages and this bill is asking us to prioritize students not in our school district that have chosen to go elsewhere over our active students when transportation problems occur. For us this could be prioritizing 2-5 non-public students over 20-25 public students. Also, it was important that the House authorized that school district could transport chartered nonpublic students in 9 -passenger vans. This would help greatly, but this is an outdated option. We would request 11 passenger vans, currently on the market as the option. This would allow us to find an additional driver when needed and improve our bussing issues when shortages occur. We have 6+ staff members who are qualified to drive our school van but do not have their CDL license.

4. **Vouchers-** By increasing the voucher program from 250% to 450% this would increase eligibility to 80% of the students in Ohio and severely undermine the resources needed in public education. This shift in the voucher system will result nonpublic schools with unregulated and unaudited requirements to crop up. ECOT- like entities will who value making money over student education will increase. You are respectfully the primary entity to protect the use of taxpayer money. If you increase voucher amount it would be careless to not place restrictions for receiving state money like what is required for public education. Audits, the same teachers and staff salary bases/ steps, educational requirements, testing and reporting, and accountability to the parents should be required. If they are to receive taxpayer money, they **SHOULD BE HELD TO THE SAME STANDARD AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**
5. **Other funding items-** Teacher baseline salary increase from \$30,000 to \$40,000. **THIS WILL BE DETRIMENTAL FOR OUR DISTRICT.** In FY23-24 the TVLS Bachelors zero step is \$37,017. To increase to \$40,000 dollars for only those teachers under this amount would cost \$64,000 approximately for salary and benefits and bring these new graduates at the same level as a 5 year veteran. The many of veteran teaching staff has already privately voiced they will leave the profession or insist all staff receive this base step increase. If this is placed on the base rate for all staff, our treasurer has calculated the increase for all teacher salaries would cost \$475,000. Adding benefit increase, which is required, and it would cost the district \$525,000+ this year and exponentially increase yearly. We value our teachers but as a school district we are fiscally responsible to our community. This will cause us to put additional money levy on the ballot and/or decreasing quality education and programs to our students. Given the economic stresses of our community we are uncertain of our renewal levy passing in November. A new levy would have little chance of passing. This is an unfunded mandate that is not sustainable to small schools.
6. **ODE changes** - I believe the changes and compromises that the House added to HB 33 is fair and superior to those proposed by SB1. SB1 would be detrimental to public education and transparency while becoming bureaucratically excessive and costly. ODE was budgeted around 12.7 billion in 2023 and would become little more that of licensing agency under SB 1. While I understand there needs improvements made to the department, it would be better to improve it rather than adding another layer of government SB1 would require.

In conclusion, the significance of funding in public education cannot be underestimated. Policymakers must consider the potential consequences of any proposed changes to funding, including their impact on students, teachers, and all communities. This requires a careful balancing of necessary investments in education with fiscal responsibility while ensuring that every student receives the education they need to succeed. Remember, 90% of all students are educated in the public school system and they need your support.

Thank you for your time,
Sally S. Green