



PRESS RELEASE

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Coalition launches campaign to fully, fairly fund Ohio public schools

Educators, parents, community groups and policy experts form All in for Ohio Kids

Today, All In For Ohio Kids officially kicked off its campaign to fully and fairly fund Ohio's public schools with a virtual press conference. [View a recording of the press conference here.](#)

The coalition, made up of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC), Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT), Policy Matters Ohio and the Ohio Education Association (OEA) is calling on state lawmakers to pass the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP), which the Ohio House of Representatives included in their version of the 2022-23 state budget passed earlier this month. It's now in the hands of the Ohio Senate.

"We have enough resources in this state to ensure every student gets a great education," said OOC Co-Executive Director Molly Shack. "And we're tired of parents and teachers and community members being pitted against each other. The job is on the legislature to get this done. The Senate needs to take action."

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled the school funding system unconstitutional in 1997 because state lawmakers failed – and still fail – to provide school districts with enough resources to educate students. Communities are forced to raise the money themselves through property taxes. Years of segregation and under-resourcing deprive many Black and brown communities, and communities with many residents experiencing poverty, of a property tax base high enough to cover the costs.

OEA member Jen Jugler teaches social studies at Valley Forge High School in Parma. She said over her 20-year career, her district has never been fairly funded by the state.

"I've lived through the years where we haven't been able to pass a levy and kids' programs have been cut," she said. "Where we're telling our students, 'Hey we want you in school but you can only take five classes and you can't come in until 9:30 and now you have to leave at 1:30.' And it's just not fair."

According to [new analysis by Policy Matters Ohio](#), the Fair School Funding Plan would reduce disparities between communities. It would also help under-resourced districts by increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students.

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.

“The plan takes the pressure off local communities that struggle to fund education,” said Policy Matters Senior Project Director Wendy Patton. “It’s based on the actual costs of education in each district, and the costs are calculated in the same way in each district – not one way in some, another way in others.”

Lawmakers froze school funding at 2019 levels, allowing its value to be eroded by inflation. But moving forward, by changing the way aid is calculated, the FFSP would end the system “of ‘band aids and patches’ currently used to fund schools,” Patton said. The formula capped maximum funding for some districts – even though they may have needed more – and held others to the minimum level of funding. As a result, prior to 2020, 503 of Ohio’s 610 school districts did not get fully funded by the state’s formula.

“As a mother of three, I get frustrated knowing that our zip code affects the cost of education for my children, said Amber Basares of Lima. “I have heard the stories of teachers financing responsibilities that should be on either the student or the school district.”

The FSFP also puts an end to policies that force public school districts to send state and local funds to charter schools and private school vouchers by simply funding the two systems separately – with charters and vouchers entirely paid for by the state.

“Cleveland Heights schools are hammered by private school voucher deductions,” said school social worker and OFT member Josephine Shelton-Townes. “We’re losing staff because of these deductions; when people retire they’re not replaced. We’ve lost counselors, social workers, teachers.”

Passing the plan would make great progress in expanding opportunity for all Ohio children, Patton said. But at the heart of the problem is a state tax code that is skewed heavily in favor of the wealthy and corporations. Lawmakers will also have to take steps to rebalance the state tax code to ensure everyone pays their fair share.

Shack said [AOK has launched a petition](#) to call on the legislature to pass the Fair School Funding Plan and over the next month will host a series of town halls on the plan around the state.

“We are asking everybody to join this movement,” she said, “because we need to make sure we have equitably, fully and fairly funded schools.”