



Education

Testimony on the Fair School Funding Plan and House Bill 110 **Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee**

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Good afternoon, Chair Brenner, ranking member Fedor and members of the committee. I am Wendy Patton, a senior project director of Policy Matters Ohio, a non-partisan, not-for-profit research organization that is building a more prosperous, inclusive, equitable and sustainable Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Fair School Funding Plan, now included in HB 110, the budget bill for 2022-23.

No matter where they live or what they look like, all of Ohio's kids deserve a public school that inspires their creativity, unlocks their potential, and nurtures their dreams. But the way schools are funded by the state today fosters unhealthy competition, pitting parents against teachers and communities against each other. Ohio's General Assembly has over time prioritized tax cuts and tax breaks, which have primarily benefitted the wealthiest Ohioans and big corporations and drained resources from our public schools and communities. Today Ohio schools are primarily dependent on local resources, which means where property values and incomes are low, children do not get the same quality of education as in places of wealth. Because of long-standing discrimination in housing, employment, health care and many other policies, many Black and brown Ohioans live in communities where local resources are low and schools are underfunded. The problem is the same in many rural communities of low income. It's time to fix this inequity.

Ohio has enough for every child to attend a great school with advanced classes, cutting-edge technology and well-trained, professional educators. We ask you to pass the Fair School Funding Plan and finally dedicate the resources needed for each and every student to succeed. We can make a better future for all of us.

The Fair School Funding Plan included in the House budget bill would fix these failures and create a fair school funding system:

- It reduces reliance on local levies by boosting state funding and basing it on the actual cost of educating students.
- It stops diverting local money for private schools and charters from districts, placing the funding responsibility with the state.
- It creates stability for districts.
- It increases funding for economically disadvantaged students.

The problems in Ohio's current school funding system have a single source: Policymakers have under-resourced public schools so they cannot meet the needs of students. And the state does

not meet the requirements of the Ohio constitution to ensure a thorough and efficient education across the state, in all communities, regardless of what residents look like, where they work and the level of their income. More than half of Ohio’s schools are funded at levels lower than the national average, and the national average itself is mediocre.¹ The Fair School Funding Plan in House Bill 110 would provide additional aid across all district types, with the biggest increase going to districts where poverty is high and the cost of educating students is the greatest. The table below shows the average increase in aid by school districts within the Ohio Department of Education’s categorization of district types.

Fair School Funding Plan		
New resources will help make the system more fair		
District typology	Typology description	Average per-pupil boost in state aid
1	Rural – High Student Poverty & Small Student Population	\$882
2	Rural – Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population	\$815
3	Small Town – Low Student Poverty & Small Student Population	\$605
4	Small Town – High Student Poverty & Average Student Population	\$1,101
5	Suburban – Low Student Poverty & Average Student Population	\$552
6	Suburban – Very Low Student Poverty & Large Student Population	\$342
7	Urban – High Student Poverty & Average Student Population	\$1,883
8	Urban – Very High Student Poverty & Very Large Student Population	\$1,122

Source: Policy Matters Ohio based on Legislative Service Commission data on the Fair School Funding Plan dated April 22, 2021. The numbers in the chart represent impact of the plan when fully phased-in.

The version of the Fair School Funding Plan in House Bill 110 is not identical to HB 305. It has its shortcomings. It is phased in, with interim measures that do not provide the full promise of the system until 2026-27. The phase-in of funding for economically disadvantaged students is slower than other components of the plan. This component of funding has never been more important, following a missed year of learning for many children.

The federal dollars coming to schools from the American Rescue Plan will be needed to deal with the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Children are not all vaccinated and may not be soon. The virus mutates. It’s a year of critical risk for schools. The American Rescue Plan dollars will be needed for the rescue related to the virus. The need for better support of schools in low-income communities is not eradicated by that one-time money.

For our state to have a bright future, all Ohio’s kids must get a great education, no matter where they live or what they look like. You can make the changes necessary to give all Ohio kids that fair shot. We look to you to do so. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

¹ “State and National Highlights Reports (Quality Counts 2020),” Education Week, <https://bit.ly/2PPcQFp>