

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE
FINANCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE
SENATOR JOHN CAREY, CHAIRMAN
FEBRUARY 5, 2008

Chairman Carey and members of the committee, my name is Fred Pausch, and I am the director of legislative services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). The Ohio School Boards Association is in its 53rd year of service to public education serving Ohio's public school boards. I apologize for not being in front of the committee today in person but my travel schedule and the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the 110th Congress has my attention today.

OSBA would like to lend our support to SJR 4, sponsored by Senator Kirk Schuring (R-Canton), that would require all lottery profits and a percentage of revenue from certain taxes to be devoted to funding primary, secondary and higher education.

OSBA has already offered our support for the basic concepts of this important proposal. The Education Trust Fund will allow for the earmarking of funds for public education apart from the state's General Revenue Fund. The Ohio Education Stabilization Fund will provide for stable funding during times of budgetary shortfalls in Ohio, and the earmarking of specific revenue streams will provide stability of state resources that school districts severely need.

Can further strides be made? Of course, but OSBA is supportive, and will continue to support proposals such as this that have the potential of reducing reliance on local property taxes, while providing stable and potentially increasing sources of state revenue to educate the 1.8 million schoolchildren of Ohio in our public schools.

Let's look back to a typical levy date and numbers from Tuesday, May 3, 2005. That day there were 184 school districts that had 197 tax issues on the primary ballot. The large number of levies is clear proof that the funding system is not working and the job of supporting schools is increasingly being placed upon local property taxpayers. Where is the relief in sight for the local taxpayer?

The working group of the Education Funding Reform represented a broad coalition of K-12, higher education, members of the business community and bi-partisanship from both sides of the aisle. OSBA would like to continue the discussion on educational funding reform here in Ohio with the legislature, business and higher education. OSBA will also

pursue other avenues of change, and we will be willing to continue this work until education reform is reached in Ohio.

OSBA knows that financial challenges lie ahead for Ohio as the nation faces a possible recession. Tough economic times have been felt already by school districts all across the state. More than 300 public school districts didn't see any additional increases in state funding from House Bill 119. The downturn in Ohio's economy hurts everybody, and Gov. Ted Strickland has stated that K-12 is a top priority in Ohio.

This testimony isn't complete until OSBA offers a thank-you to the legislature and past governors who have had a big hand in creating the Ohio School Facilities Commission. Since 1997, close to \$6 billion of state dollars have been spent building new schools all across Ohio. The commitment shown by our state leaders have made Ohio one of the leading state programs in total dollars spent. Over 500 school buildings have already been opened and another 300 are in design or construction stages. Governor Strickland and the legislature, including Senate President Bill Harris and Speaker Jon Husted, have continued to support this program by passing the tobacco securitization initiative, setting aside an additional \$4.1 billion dollars over the next three years to continue this program.

Thank you for allowing OSBA to express our support of SJR 4.