

Good evening Chairmen Amstutz and members of the subcommittee. My name is Dan Greenberg, and I am an English teacher at Southview High School in Sylvania.

I want to tell you a little about Sylvania. It's a small suburb of Toledo with a quaint downtown. It's a great place to raise kids; my wife was raised there, and she and I are raising our three daughters there, too. Sylvania isn't home to the fastest roller coaster in the world. We don't have a pro football hall of fame. We aren't the location of the world headquarters of a huge corporation.

What we do have is great public schools. They are what Sylvania is known for. They are the pride of our community. They are the reason people move from other areas of Toledo to settle in Sylvania.

I'm here speaking to you today because I am worried about Sylvania schools. Year after year, Sylvania schools earn state rankings of Excellent or Excellent with Distinction, and year after year, our state funding is cut.

We do more with less, time and time again. Employees take pay freezes, increase their contributions to health care and teach larger and larger classes. Our administration and school board make hard choices, cutting programs and services. They put off plans to improve technology. They stretch every dollar to preserve the educational experience of each child.

Sylvania Schools has seen millions of dollars in reductions of state funds. The steady reduction in funding has led to the loss of over 100 positions district-wide.

Fortunately, members of our community understand the importance of strong schools, and have passed every levy effort except one in the twelve years I have been with Sylvania schools. Unfortunately, in an economy in which property values have significantly decreased over the past ten years, Sylvania schools couldn't put a levy on the ballot with adequate millage to compensate for the loss of state funding.

Let me tell you about the repercussions the one time in over a decade the levy failed. It was November 2010. In the months that followed, the community heard of looming draconian cuts facing our district. At a school board meeting, about 800 students, teachers and parents filled the high school to plead for programs that were dear to them. There was a group of high school kids that talked about the choir program, explaining not only how much they loved it, but the opportunities it afforded them in college. There were people pleading to keep extra-curricular programs. There were impassioned speeches. There were tears. This went on for almost four hours. Do you know how horrible it feels to watch caring, concerned community members plead their cases for the programs that they value most, knowing that most will be greatly reduced and knowing that this flawed system of school funding hurts kids? It was gut-wrenching.

The lack of adequate funding is taking its toll on Sylvania schools. Students who want to take advanced placement courses are being shut out because we don't have enough staff to teach the needed number of sections. Extra help and interventions for struggling students have decreased. The staffing cuts at the high school last year led the school board to reduce the number of credits required of each student to graduate. At a time when we want to push students and create more rigorous standards for children to attain, we are lowering our standards due to insufficient state

funds. Additionally the number of teachers mentoring high school students is down, as teachers struggle to stay on top of their increased work load.

Speaking of teachers, teacher morale is low, and much of that has to do with the funding situation. With the drastic personnel cuts, teachers have been forced to transfer to other buildings, losing the connections to their colleagues and the families they have worked with for years. Two years ago, the district, in order to save money in the long run, offered teachers a retirement incentive of \$24,000 paid out over three years. Thirty four out of 500 teachers took this retirement incentive. Last year, there was no incentive, yet thirty-six teachers retired. Many of these teachers told me that the struggles of the past year, including the financial difficulties of the district, made them choose to end their careers earlier than they anticipated.

Look at the math. Seventy teachers retired in two years. That's just under 15% of the teachers across our district. These are not "bad teachers." These are not washed up teachers. These are my colleagues and friends who have inspired me through my twelve years of teaching. These are people who I have learned from and who have helped me grow as an educator. These were veteran teachers who had a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with students. The students are the ones who really pay the price.

The situation in Sylvania frustrates me when I consider the funding crisis we face. We want great schools so that Ohio children can excel. I teach in a district full of great schools. It doesn't make sense to continue to cut funding to excellent schools and shift that money to unproven and often ineffective charter schools. It doesn't make sense to continue to give tax breaks and create tax loopholes when Ohio children desperately need the dollars, so they can receive a quality education.

As you consider new funding formulas, please think about Sylvania. Please think about the community that has, for decades, prided itself on great public schools. Think about how new policies, which could further cut funding, would not only diminish our schools, but our entire community. Think about the hard-working Sylvania residents who consistently vote for levies, but cannot continue to increase their property taxes to balance drastic state cuts. Think about my three little girls and the other children of Sylvania, who deserve a quality education.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and for your consideration. I would be glad to answer any questions you might have.