Op-ed for use by school leaders:

***Title: It's Time for Ohio to Fully Fund K-12 Schools (for Taxpayers, too)***

In the next few months, our state legislators will determine the future of Ohio schools with a crucial vote on one piece of legislation. They will determine whether the plan to fairly (adequately and equitably) fund Ohio schools through Fair School Funding Plan will be fully funded.

The Ohio General Assembly took a giant step forward for Ohio’s students and schools by enacting the Fair School Funding Plan in the last biennial budget. The Fair School Funding Plan bases state school funding on what a student needs to succeed. It is a plan that was developed collaboratively by a team of educational leaders. The formula treats all Ohio school districts and taxpayers fairly, based upon their capacity to raise local funds.

The implementation of this formula represents a move toward the equitable and adequate funding of Ohio’s schools. However, for the plan to be effective and constitutional, there is still work to be done. For the formula to work and provide an equitable and adequate education for Ohio children – it must be fully funded. When fully implemented, the formula will ensure that Ohio’s children have the quality educational opportunities they all deserve.

Now is the time for the state to fully fund K-12 education. Ohio is in excellent financial shape with state tax revenues for fiscal year (FY) 2022 finishing $2.7 billion above the state’s original estimates. The Office of Budget and Management (OBM) has increased the state’s tax revenue estimates for FY 2023 by $1.65 billion (6.3%). Additionally, the legislature had previously maxed out the rainy day fund at $2.7 billion—a fund that has not been touched even during the pandemic. The state’s average $400 million annual contribution to this fund should instead be invested in fully funding the school funding formula for Ohio’s children—our future leaders. This investment will lead to a robust economy and strong workforce for our state.

Every dollar invested in our local schools impacts our local economy and our future workforce. Once fully implemented, the Fair School Funding Plan will bring predictability and stability for Ohio schools, allowing districts to sustain and develop programming that will prepare all students for success. That means Ohio will continue to be a destination and a desirable place to live, work and raise a family.

Fully funding the formula makes sense. Ohio has the funds to implement the well-crafted, bipartisan plan. It is often said that what we value, we are willing to fund. As our legislators begin discussions of priorities for the next biennium budget, they need to hear from you about the importance and urgency of investing in Ohio’s children and fully funding the formula.

I urge you to join me in reaching out to our local Senator, NAME, and Representative, NAME, to share your support for the full implementation of the Fair School Funding Plan and the importance of investing in Ohio’s future.