

Local Tax Dollars Essential to Dover Schools

In the past few weeks, Representatives Bob Cupp and John Patterson introduced bipartisan legislation that would provide a new funding formula for Ohio's public schools. I applaud the Cupp-Patterson workgroup and its efforts to develop a school funding system that is fair to students and taxpayers.

This new proposal must make its way through the legislative process and there is already opposition. It is still just an idea, and does not yet even have the required funding to implement as proposed. It is unlikely to look like it currently does even if or when it would go into effect. Therefore, regardless of any new funding proposal, Dover Schools' need for May's ballot request is still real and does not go away.

Dover City Schools runs a lean operating budget. Data supports this. We spend 19% less than the state average in per student spending. We have and will continue to make reductions to operate efficiently. In the past, we have eliminated 19 high school and middle school positions, changed the high school and middle school schedules to serve more students without adding teachers, and eliminated custodial and classroom assistant positions across the district. Currently, we are working to reconfigure the three elementary buildings to reduce staff and increase class sizes. With this change included, nine additional teaching positions have been eliminated in the past two years.

Asking taxpayers for additional funding is something we never take lightly. We carefully consider all options before we ask our residents for a tax levy. We have stretched our dollars as far as possible, making budget reductions over the last decade to stay off the ballot for as long as possible. The financial challenges we face today are not a result of a spending issue, but rather the result of years of reductions in state support.

We are already working with less to meet state and federal requirements, as well as the expectations of our community. Without a doubt, further cuts will impact the quality of the education we provide for Dover students. We are at a crossroads and are counting on voters to make a critical decision about the future of our district.

Dover has maintained excellence in spite of a state funding system that is flawed and was deemed unconstitutional 23 years ago. Yes, a solution might be on the horizon, but we can't afford to wait. The need for additional operating money to preserve our programming is now. We can't sit this one out; our children and their education are too important.