



# SOUTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

10800 Campbell Rd Harrison, Ohio 45030 (513) 367-4139 Fax (513) 367-2287

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John C. Hamstra  
Superintendent

Thomas J. Lowe  
Treasurer

Corinne M. Hayes  
Assistant Superintendent

Adam D. Lohbeck  
Director of Operations

## Conference Committee House Bill 96 June 16, 2025

Ranking members of the House Bill 96 Conference Committee.

My name is Thomas Lowe, and I serve as the Treasurer for the Southwest Local School District in Hamilton & Butler Counties. The Southwest Local School District is a 68 square mile district, 4,200 students, 38% free and reduced students, and spends \$12,954 per student to educate students. This spending is the lowest in Hamilton County on a per pupil basis, and \$3,356.35 less than the state average.

Under the proposed budget, Southwest would receive a total reduction in state aid of over 10% totaling \$2,174,800 over the next two years. In fiscal year 2026, cuts to Southwest represent 59% of the cuts to education in all of Ohio even though Southwest only represents 0.20% of the State's spending on education. Currently, Southwest receives \$4,817.98 in state aid per pupil, \$2,625.14 below the state average. If the state does not increase base costs, Southwest would lose nearly \$5,500,000 in state aid per year by fiscal year 2029. That represents a per student reduction of \$1,300 in 2029. This is all while seeing student population growth of nearly 100 students a year over the last 5 years.

As inflation has soared over the last two years, Southwest has continued to be a leader in financial efficiency, spending less than our peers and leading the Hamilton County in financial efficiency. However, the reductions necessary to balance our budget under this plan will be unsustainable, resulting in much higher student to teacher ratios, elimination of important programs key to graduation, gifted programs, safety programs, and many mental health supports. Southwest has not asked for additional operating property taxes funds since 1993. The current budget takes Southwest to a negative cash position by 2028 without significant reductions.

We certainly understand the need for the state to balance spending and provide relief for taxpayers. **However, we are asking the conference committee to consider placing some boundaries in the formula that prevent schools like Southwest Local from seeing dramatic reductions in State aid. One mechanism could be as simple as ensuring state aid is at least equal to fiscal year 2025 or limit overall reduction to 2% from the prior year.** This would ensure Southwest is not forced to make considerable reductions. It is our hope the conference committee can find a commonsense solution.

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**Motto:** "Excellence through Relationships!"

**Core Values:** Trust, Respect, Ownership, and Leadership



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In closing, the Fair School Funding Plan represents more than just a funding formula - it represents our commitment to every Ohio student, family, and community. By fully implementing this plan, we invest in stronger communities, a more competitive workforce, and a brighter future for Ohio. Thank you for your consideration of these crucial next steps in supporting Ohio's educational excellence.

Every dollar invested in education is a seed planted for Ohio's future, ensuring that tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and change-makers grow right here at home!

Thank you,

Thomas J. Lowe  
Treasurer  
Southwest Local School District  
Hamilton / Butler Counties

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