




# CLARK-SHAWNEE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE


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October 18, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Willis  
77 S. High St, Floor 11  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Representative Willis,

We, the members of the Clark-Shawnee Local School Board of Education, write to express our deep concern regarding the significant impact of Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA), and other tax abatement programs on our school district's funding. These programs allow companies to divert 75% to 100% of our levy funds for ten to fifteen years without our board's approval. According to Policy Matters Ohio, tax abatements have resulted in 180 school districts across Ohio forfeiting \$125.6 million in revenue (Zach Schiller, Policy Matters Ohio, October 2, 2018).

Our district is a stark example of this issue. In 2018, under ORC 5709.40, the City of Springfield granted a TIF to a housing development of 258 homes, diverting 75% of our levy funds for ten years without our approval. Five years later, in 2023, Springfield approved a CRA for another development of 1,200 homes, diverting 100% of our levy funds for fifteen years while adding an anticipated 700 students to our district. Two more developments, totaling 332 homes, have also requested TIFs. This influx of students necessitates new school infrastructure, but the diverted funds leave us without the revenue to build it. Currently, Ohio law permits these TIFs and CRAs.

Nationally, this issue is widespread. A February 16, 2024 report in "The Conversation" stated: "A 2021 review of 2,498 financial statements from schools across 27 states revealed that in 2019, at least \$2.4 billion was redirected for tax incentives. Students lose out as cities and states give billions in property tax breaks to businesses, draining school budgets and especially hurting the poorest students." (<https://theconversation.com>)

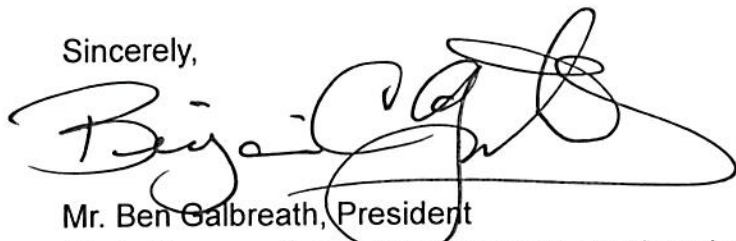
Good Jobs First, a national organization, asserts, "The strongest way to protect school revenues from being depleted by business subsidies is for the state government to prohibit the abatement or diversion of the school section of property taxes." (NEA report, January 2003, Protecting Public Education from Giveaways to Corporations). Some states, including Florida, Maryland, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Washington, have already taken such measures.

It is time for Ohio to follow suit. Cities across the state, from Cleveland, which lost \$34.2 million in revenue, to Cincinnati, which lost \$18.4 million, and smaller districts like Garfield Heights, Rossford, and Troy City Schools, are all suffering from reduced school revenue due to TIFs and abatements (Zach Schiller, Policy Matters Ohio).

When voters approve a school levy, the state-mandated ballot language does not indicate that the funds will be diverted to anything other than school revenue. Redirecting school levy funds to corporations should be considered illegal.

Please act to correct this injustice and protect our children's education by developing legislation that safeguards school levy money.

Sincerely,



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