Allen County Schools

A Letter to Our Allen County Community

From Your Allen County School Superintendents & Treasurers

Dear Allen County Residents,

As your local school superintendents and treasurers, we write to you not as politicians or advocates, but as fellow parents, community members, and stewards of the education system that defines the heart of Allen County. We share your frustration with rising property taxes. We, too, open those tax bills with concern. But today, we must share the complete picture of what's happening in our state – and what it means for the services we all depend on.

The Numbers Don't Lie: Ohio Has Shifted the Burden to You

Over the past two decades, our state lawmakers have made a choice. It wasn't a choice made in one dramatic moment, but through twenty years of gradual decisions that have fundamentally changed how Ohio funds education – and who pays the bill.

Here are the facts:

- In 2002, Ohio ranked 35th nationally in state funding for K-12 education
- By 2023, we had plummeted to 45th, among the worst in the nation
- Ohio's state share of education funding dropped from 44.8% to just 33.5%, 11.2 percentage points below the national average
- Meanwhile, our local property tax burden jumped from 49.5% to 53.1% of education funding

What does this mean for you? While the national average shows states funding about 45% of education costs, Ohio now funds only 33.5%, leaving local communities like ours to pick up the difference. We're not spending more on education per student than we should be. In fact, Ohio ranks 20th nationally in per-pupil spending. We're simply being forced to fund it differently than other states, through your property taxes instead of through state resources.

This Affects More Than Just Schools

Proposed measures to drastically reduce or totally eliminate property taxes may sound appealing when you're writing that tax check. We understand that impulse completely. But property taxes fund more than just schools, they support the infrastructure of daily life that makes Allen County the place we choose to call home.

Consider what $24 billion in lost local revenue means:

- Your children's schools – from classroom supplies to school safety measures
- Fire and emergency services – the first responders who come when you call
- Local roads and infrastructure – the bridges you cross and streets you drive daily
- Community services – from parks to senior programs that knit our community together

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Our Children Deserve Better Than Political Solutions

Every child in Allen County deserves the same opportunities we had growing up here - excellent teachers, safe schools, and educational programs that prepare them for success. These aren't luxuries; they're investments in our community's future.

The data shows that Ohio's schools aren't the problem, but state disinvestment is. When Ohio falls from 24th to 41st nationally in state revenue per pupil, when our state funding per student is now $2,672 below the national average, the burden inevitably falls on local communities like ours.

A Call for Real Solutions

We don't write this letter to defend the status quo or to ask you to simply accept higher property taxes. We write because we believe our community, and our children, deserve honest solutions, not quick fixes that could devastate the services that make Allen County strong.

Real property tax relief must involve the state of Ohio stepping up to fulfill its responsibility to fund public education, just as 44 other states do more effectively than we do. The burden of educating Ohio's children shouldn't fall so heavily on local homeowners. Real property tax relief can be achieved through thoughtful, targeted approaches that protect both our community services and our residents:

Targeted Relief for Those Who Need It Most:

- Enhanced property tax relief for seniors on fixed incomes
- Expanded exemptions for citizens with disabilities
- Strengthened homestead exemptions for low-income families

Sustainable Growth Protections:

- Revenue growth limits that prevent unsustainable year-over-year increases
- Caps tied to inflation and income growth to ensure affordability
- Automatic triggers for community review when increases exceed reasonable thresholds

Local Control and Transparency:

- Greater local flexibility in structuring tax abatements and exemptions
- Enhanced transparency in how tax incentives are granted and monitored

We need our state legislators to be partners in this solution, not bystanders watching local communities struggle with burdens they've shifted to us.

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Moving Forward Together

The path forward requires all of us, residents, educators, and elected officials, working together to demand that Ohio provide adequate state funding for education while pursuing meaningful property tax relief. Other states have found this balance. Ohio can too.

We invite you to stay engaged, ask questions, and demand accountability from all levels of government. Our children's future and our county's strength depend on getting this right.

Thank you for your continued support of public education and for being a county that puts children first.

Sincerely,
Mel Rentschler & Andrea Snyder, Allen East Local Schools
Mike Estes & Joel Parker, Bath Local Schools
Greg Denecker & Paula Parish, Bluffton Exempted Village Schools
Jeff Hobbs & Laura Peters, Delphos City Schools
Joel Mengerink & Larry Kaiser, Elida Local Schools
Andre Rudolph & Heather Sharp, Lima City Schools
Kelly Schooler & Mandy France, Perry Local Schools
Don Diglia & Chris Cross, Shawnee Local Schools
Brian Woods & Jennifer Sudhoff, Spencerville Local Schools
Craig Kupferberg & Karla Wireman, Allen County Educational Service Center