WILLOUGHBY-EASTLAKE CITY SCHOOLS

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February 12, 2026

Dear Willoughby-Eastlake Community,

I am writing with important updates about recent state and county legislative changes and what they mean for the future of Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools.

This is the first of a series of monthly updates to continue to keep our families informed.

Over the past several months, multiple pieces of legislation were passed at the state level, along with key decisions made at the county level, that significantly alter how public schools in Ohio are funded. These changes were adopted late in the year, primarily in December, and only now, with updated data and forecasting tools, have we been able to fully model their combined impact on our district.

While these policies were not targeted specifically at Willoughby-Eastlake, their effect on our schools is real and measurable.

Recent changes to the state budget allow county commissioners to expand property tax credits without reimbursement from the State of Ohio. While this provides relief to some homeowners, it reduces revenue for school districts. For Willoughby-Eastlake, this results in an estimated ***$2.8 million loss each year.***

Here is a summary of the impact from 2025-2030:

Reappraisal (Moved Back 2031)	$686,714
HB 129	$3,487,817
HB 186	$5,209,634
Piggyback (County Level Property Tax Relief)	$12,454,716.57
Total Revenue Reduction by Legislative Action	$21,838,881.93

These numbers matter because schools cannot reduce costs at the same pace that revenue is constrained. They matter because each dollar supports teachers, academic programs, student services, safety, and expanded opportunities. They matter because the future we envision for our students, being future-ready, innovative, and grounded in strong community values, requires stability and thoughtful long-term planning.

I want to be clear on two points.

First, **our schools remain strong**. We are proud of our students, staff, and the progress being made across our district. We are managing resources responsibly and planning carefully.

Second, **there is hope in early engagement**. Transparency and shared understanding give us the opportunity to explore options together, before decisions are forced upon us. Our community has always stepped forward when the future of our students was at stake.

In the months ahead, I will continue to provide clear, consistent updates about these legislative changes, their financial implications, and the steps we are taking to plan responsibly. Our Board of Education and leadership team remain committed to protecting classroom learning, student opportunities, and the long-term strength of Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and your continued partnership. The work ahead is important. Together, informed and united, we can ensure a strong and sustainable future for our students and our community.

With appreciation and resolve,

Patrick Ward

Patrick Ward, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools