State Support of K-12 Public Education Dips To All Time Low As Ohio Students Head Back to School

Higher property taxes & lower national rankings are simultaneously "squeezing Ohio families."



Ohio Fair School Funding Formula

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, August 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As Ohio students head back to school, they will walk into classrooms with the lowest degree of state support for public education in Ohio history.

Data from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce show the state's share of K-12 school funding has fallen to a historic low near 32 percent. That's down from about 44 percent in the 1990s, when the Ohio Supreme Court ruled the state's school funding model unconstitutional for over-reliance on property taxes.

Ohio has consistently ranked in the lowest 20% of state support of public education.

What is Ohio's Fair School Funding Plan?
In 2020, Republicans and Democrats came together to fix Ohio's school funding system. The effort began in November 2017 under the leadership of two now-former state representatives: House Speaker Bob Cupp, a Republican, and John Patterson, a Democrat. They worked with experienced Ohio superintendents and treasurers to develop a complete overhaul of the state's school funding system. The resulting plan was grounded in Ohio school data, national research, proven practices, and established funding models.

The Ohio House passed the Fair School Funding Plan 87 to 9 in December of 2020, one of the most bipartisan budgetary votes in the General Assembly's history. The plan was supposed to be phased in over six years.

What happened to school funding in Ohio between 2020-2025?

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>
> *Jared Bunting*

During that period, the Fair School Funding Plan provided a nearly $1.5 billion increase in state funding and 12.1% increase to traditional PK-12 school funding.

"This is a unique model, designed to address the needs of Ohio's students today and prepare Ohio's workforce of tomorrow," said Kevin Miller, superintendent of Licking Heights Local School District. "It also respects local control and allows districts the flexibility to direct the prescribed resources to meet the specific needs of their students."

What happened to school funding in Ohio in FY 2026?
In the biennial budget adopted for FY 2026–27, state lawmakers did not update the Fair School Funding Plan's cost inputs, requiring the formula to continue calculating school funding using FY 2022 costs. As the actual costs of salaries, benefits, transportation, utilities, technology, and other essential school operations continue to rise, the outdated inputs understate what it currently costs to educate Ohio students. Because property values and income data used to calculate each district's local capacity continue to be updated, freezing the cost side of the formula also shifts a greater share of the responsibility to local taxpayers.

Why are Ohioans paying higher property taxes?
In 1975, businesses paid 53.9% of Ohio's local school property taxes, while residents and farmers paid the other 46.1%, including the share renters pay their landlords to cover the taxes on those properties. Today, residents pay 68 percent and businesses pay 32 percent.

"Higher residential property taxes are a result of a 30-plus year history of legislative actions to ease the tax burden on business to encourage economic growth," said Michael Hanlon, superintendent of Chardon schools in Geauga County. "Residents and farmers are paying, either directly or indirectly, much more now than ever before. As inflation keeps climbing, business support for schools keeps shrinking. This means a heavier burden to support education falls on residential property owners through higher property taxes."

Hanlon continues, "Teachers need to be paid, buildings need to be maintained, and students need to be transported, even as inflation drives those costs higher each year. State funding must recognize and respond to these increasing costs so that today's students receive the same quality educational opportunities as the students who came before them. Without corresponding increases in state support, those additional costs fall entirely on local taxpayers, who already bear the largest share of the responsibility for funding Ohio's schools."

Why has school funding in Ohio been an issue for generations?
Ryan Pendleton, former Treasurer/CFO of Akron Public Schools, added that the Ohio

Constitution mandates that the State “maintain a thorough and efficient system of common schools” and that the cost of those schools is to be shared by the State and local taxpayers.

“However, in FY 2027, the state’s share has dipped to a record low of 32.5%, despite the fact that, in 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court had ruled that the school funding formula then in effect was unconstitutional because of its over reliance on local property taxes,” Pendleton said. “The state’s share is worse now than when it was declared unconstitutional nearly 30 years ago, and families are footing that bill.“
Jared Bunting, a veteran school Treasurer/CFO in Southeastern Ohio, encouraged Ohioans in every legislative district to contact their state representative and senator and tell them to finish the job.

“The Fair School Funding Plan should be fully funded and implemented permanently. Every component was independently vetted and justified, and the House passed it on an 87 to 9 vote,” Bunting said. “All districts, students and taxpayers have the right to a fair, permanent, reliable, predictable and fully funded K-12 schools funding formula. The Fair School Funding Plan is that formula.”

Ohioans can visit https://www.fairschoolfundingplan.com/ to learn more about the plan, how it supports public education, and fosters economic growth throughout all of Ohio.

About the Fair School Funding Plan
The FSFP Work Group is composed of Ohio K-12 Superintendents and Treasurer/CFO’s, originally 8 of each, currently 12 of each, to develop an objective, student needs based, transparent K-12 funding formula to replace a highly criticized, inconsistent system that was not providing fairness or accuracy in the funding of Ohio schools. It was inspired by two now former state representatives, Speaker Bob Cupp (R) and John Patterson (D). The Ohio House approved the plan after it was introduced in 2020 by an 87-9 vote, The planwas incorporated in the subsequent biennial budgets adopted in 2021, 2023 and 2025. Visit https://www.fairschoolfundingplan.com.
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Jim Betts
Ohio Fair School Funding Plan
+1 (614) 398-0704
info@fairschoolfundingplan.com

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