

**Former State Representative John Patterson had a remarkable, noteworthy Guest Column regarding the Fair School Funding Plan published in the June 20 Plain Dealer.**

John Patterson and Robert Cupp, a longtime honorable public servant are co-architects of what has been labeled the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding plan. Several years ago, they, with the help of public school district leaders, developed what is currently called the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding plan. The legislature adopted the plan but is not appropriately funding it. Unless it is fully funded in the short term, the plan will not survive.

Dr. Patterson's column provides the background of the plan and is an appeal to keep it in the law.

**Preserve and fully implement Ohio's breakthrough Fair School Funding Plan: John Patterson**

By

- [Guest Columnist, cleveland.com](#)

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Ohio made a commitment to fairness, and it should continue that commitment to the Fair School Funding Plan, columnist John Patterson, a former state legislator, writes. Andrea Levy, Advance Local

I was first elected to the Ohio House of Representatives in 2012 determined to make a difference for the nearly 90% of Ohio children who attend public schools. As a high school history teacher, cross-country coach and Model U.N. adviser, I've had the privilege of serving Ohio's students.

I also negotiated contracts that reflected both the financial constraints our school district faced and the values we hold as educators. I saw firsthand the ways that inadequate and inequitable state funding affected our students -- not just in budgets, but in opportunities.

I am one of the architects of the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) that would finally fix Ohio's unconstitutional school funding system. None of the proposals presented for the next two-year state budget by Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio House, or Ohio Senate incorporate all the necessary components of the FSFP.

In 2015, I met state Rep. Bob Cupp, a respected former justice of the Ohio Supreme Court and former state senator, then serving as Chair of the Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee. We recognized that Ohio's existing school funding formula was deeply flawed, neither fair nor efficient.

We recruited a team of people who best knew the needs of Ohio's youth: Ohio's educators. Our charge to the workgroup — made up of superintendents and treasurers — was to develop a formula that was justifiable, research-driven, transparent, predictable, and scalable. Their painstaking work created the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding Plan.

At the heart of the FSFP is a base cost formula that defines the actual cost of educating a typical student. It accounts for essential elements such as teacher and staff compensation, technology, building operations, and student support services. The plan also includes targeted funding for students with additional needs: special education, career-tech, gifted, English learners, and the economically disadvantaged.

Importantly, the FSFP also uses both property wealth and income data to determine each community's ability to support their school district. This dual approach ensures the local share is fair and reflects true taxpayer capacity. The lower a district's capacity, the more the state contributes, just as it should be in a system that strives for equity in funding and equality in opportunity.

Because the new formula represented a significant improvement, but additional cost, we agreed to phase it in gradually over six years starting in 2022. The phase-in was a commitment to Ohio's students, educators, and taxpayers, that we would finally move away from a broken system.

Gov. DeWine's budget for the next two years and the version approved by the state Senate continue the phase-in of years five and six. But they fail to update the formula's core figures to reflect rising costs, effectively freezing the base cost inputs. This oversight will force districts onto a "guarantee," meaning they'll receive funding based not on need, but on outdated figures from 2021.

The House's version goes even further, abandoning the FSFP entirely in favor of a temporary guarantee that ensures districts receive as much, or slightly more, than they received in 2025, with no connection to actual student need or capacity.

The FSFP is the most thoughtful, student-focused formula Ohio has ever had. It was adopted with broad bipartisan support and crafted by practitioners with proven expertise and a shared commitment to fairness and fiscal responsibility. All they ask is the opportunity to continue that effort, working with lawmakers to refine the formula so that it remains responsive to both the educational needs of students and the financial realities of the state.

Ohio made a commitment to fairness, and it should continue that commitment to the Fair School Funding Plan.

*John Patterson, Ph.D., is a former teacher, state representative and U.S. Department of Agriculture state executive director of the Farm Service Agency.*