

Commentary in the November 20 Capital Journal: Ohioans support our public schools, despite some politicians' best efforts

The public common school system, as mandated in the Ohio Constitution, has withstood unwarranted political assault since at least the 1983 Nation at Risk report was issued by the Reagan administration. (The report has been demonstrated to be bogus.) In the aftermath of the report, absurd requirements and appraisal measures have been heaped upon the public school system year after year.

It seems the motivation behind some of these schemes is to reduce public confidence in the public school system. Even though billions of dollars have been shifted from public schools to lower performing charter and voucher alternatives, causing serious underfunding of public education, the public school system continues to command a high level of support from public school parents.

Ohioans support our public schools, despite some politicians' best efforts

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Children walk through an elementary school. Photo by Jon Cherry/Getty Images)

South Euclid-Lyndhurst Schools and Westerville City Schools don't have much in common.

While the students in the South Euclid-Lyndhurst School District are majority Black, that's not the case for residents, especially in Lyndhurst which is overwhelmingly white.

Westerville is an increasingly diverse district that straddles Franklin and Delaware County.

We both passed school levies despite constant attacks on public education from a group of powerful Ohio politicians.

Most Ohioans want the best for our state's children – even if we don't have any of our own.

We understand that strong public schools keep our neighborhoods vibrant.

We know it just doesn't pass the smell test when politicians try to blame the property tax squeeze on public schools.

After all, they created the problem in the first place by slashing school funding to give handouts to big corporations and their wealthy political donors.

In most years, only about half of school levies pass. This year two-thirds succeeded.

In Westerville, 57% of Delaware County voters and two-thirds of Franklin County voters supported a 0.75% income tax to fund the district's basic operating expenses like staff, programs and materials.

Just last year, voters defeated Westerville's combined capital bond and operating levy.

In South Euclid-Lyndhurst, 58% of voters approved a 7.9 mil property tax levy to fund building repairs and day-to-day expenses.

Both campaigns had a clear message to voters: These levies are essential to fund the programs and people that prepare our children to succeed. It's up to us to fund our schools because the state isn't coming to save us.

Ohio Speaker of the House Matt Huffman and Ohio Senate President Rob McColley pushed through a 2026-27 state budget that underfunded public schools by \$2.8 billion but gave a \$1.68 billion tax cut to

the wealthiest 20% of Ohioans and \$2.5 billion to unaccountable private schools through the voucher program.

They even handed over \$600 million of our unclaimed funds to their billionaire political donors, the owners of the Cleveland Browns, for a new stadium in Brook Park.

South Euclid-Lyndhurst and Westerville were hit hard by the last state budget.

Most lawmakers voted to abandon the Fair School Funding Plan which would have finally ensured the state contributes its fair share of what it costs to educate children in every district.

Under the 2026-27 budget South Euclid-Lyndhurst had its funding cut by \$727,941 and Westerville by \$935,352.

Under the Fair School Funding Plan, South Euclid-Lyndhurst would have received an additional \$3.68 million and Westerville just over \$6 million, [according to Policy Matters Ohio](#).

Years of state tax cuts have forced school districts to ask more of local residents.

[A recent study](#) showed that Ohio has the eighth highest property tax rates, but the 45th share of state funding for public education in the nation.

State lawmakers are pumping out a slew of ill-informed property tax proposals — most of which would provide negligible relief to homeowners but would further defund our public schools.

Speaker Huffman and Senate President McColley hope Ohioans will blame teachers, principals, and superintendents.

But they're leaving out the part about how they force local communities to make up the difference by slashing public school funding so they can give kickbacks to their wealthy friends and donors.

At a time when people are collecting signatures to abolish property taxes and lawmakers are proposing [one half-baked property tax bill](#) after [another](#) — it seemed like this could be a tough election for school levies.

Instead, it was the opposite.

But Ohioans won't let a few greedy politicians trick us into carrying water for their billionaire donors.

This election we called their bluff.

Now it's time to demand real solutions: like full and fair funding for our public schools.