THE FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING PLAN / CUPP-PATTERSON

State Representatives Bob Cupp(R) Lima, and John Patterson(D) Jefferson:

Concluded that Ohio’s school funding formula was irreparably broken. When the original bill was introduced (HB 305) 360 districts were on a guarantee, 145 were capped, and fewer than 20% were on the formula which created widely varying state shares for districts with similar capacities; caused state shares for districts to change even though their “wealth” had not; had a base cost per pupil amount that had not changed for several years and did not represent any specific components or address any discernible student needs.

They envisioned that an Ohio formula, crafted by Ohio educational practitioners - active superintendents and treasurers with the day to day responsibility for preparing our youth and operating our schools – could be created that was fair to all students, schools and taxpayers.

They recruited eight active Ohio Superintendents and eight active Ohio Treasurers to constitute a FSFP workGroup and to co-chair 8 SubGroups, each of which was to address specific subject areas, in order to develop a comprehensive, new formula.

They demanded that all caps be eliminated and guarantees be reduced to an absolute minimum; and that all proposals be Objective, Transparent, Justifiable and Amendable, and based upon student needs. “JUSTIFY! JUSTIFY! JUSTIFY!” was their mantra.

The WorkGroup:

Created an objective, variable Base Cost for all students, including separate per pupil amounts for Career Tech, Community schools and STEM school that fully satisfied the DeRolph decision’s standard for adequacy.

Developed a distribution system(district state/local share calculations), based on both property and income wealth, that fairly and accurately establishes a district’s capacity to support public education and satisfy’s the DeRolph standard for equity.

Reviewed, amended and sought additional data in order to accurately identify and meet the needs of students with disabilities, the gifted, english learners and the economically disadvantaged; providing an interim per pupil increase for the latter.

Instituted a direct payment process so that state monies supporting open enrollment, community school and voucher students are paid directly to the schools where they are taught, thereby eliminating the need for money transfers from the districts where they live.

Reviewed and made revisions to transportation policy, including a substantial increase in the transportation funding for special education students; changed definitions to more accurately calculate the density supplement; established listed a permanent bus purchase assistance plan and called for a study that would justify increase in funding for community school and voucher students.

Established a scheduled 6 year phase-in to allow the total funding increases called for inheritance fully funded formula to be comfortably assimilated by the existing state tax structure.

The new, different changes to be faced in the 2023 and 2025 budget cycles.

The Challenge:

Term limits will have eliminated many of the original supporters of the Plan. Rep. Patterson was term limited on 12-31 2020; Speaker Cupp will be term limited on 12-31-2022.

The administration was relatively inactive regarding the FSFP beginning in the Fall of 2020, acknowledging that it planned ago accept whatever plan the Legislature recommended. Further, no mention of the FSFP was made in the 2022 State of the State address by the Governor. However, whoever is governor in early 2023 must, of necessity, address the approximately 90% of the plan that is now included in the Ohio Revised code when he/she submits a budget proposal for FY 2024 and FY 2025 in early 2023.

Each new fiscal year will require an additional $300 to $350 million per year(compared to a recent history of $160 to$180 million).

The economically disadvantaged interim per pupil increase, that was delayed in the current budget, must be returned to the proposed 6 year phase-in schedule.

Data years must be updated.

Fairness may dictate that some districts that have been recipients of unjustifiable increases under the old formula, or have experienced unusually large increases in property valuation (i.e. pipeline construction), may receive little or no funding increases.

The Ask

Much help is needed to develop increased awareness and support among legislators, within the administration, and in the media and public at large. Every meeting, every social organization, every opportunity should be viewed as an opening to talk about the FSFP. If not now, 25 years after DeRolph, when? How many more students will be impacted if we, on our watch, at this time, fall short to secure a fair school funding plan for Ohio?