



**PROPONENT TESTIMONY  
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HB1  
MICHAEL DYLAN BRENNAN  
MAYOR OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS  
APRIL 13, 2021**

President Laura Kohler, Vice President Charlotte McGuire, Superintendent Paolo DeMaria, members of the State Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to address the body to speak in favor of the Resolution sponsored by District 11 Board of Education Member Meryl Johnson in Support of HB 1.

My name is Michael Dylan Brennan. I am the Mayor of University Heights, home of John Carroll University, and a first ring suburb east of Cleveland.

My support of the resolution and of HB1 is on behalf of the 57,000-plus residents of two cities, University Heights and Cleveland Heights, standing together with our shared school board.

With the November 2020 school levy that passed by just 145 votes out of 29,987 cast, the five-year projection for our district shows the district running out of money at the end of year two.

Meanwhile, EdChoice is taking \$9.2 million out of the school district's funds. Add in all voucher programs, and this is over \$15.4 million.

Like many of you, I support school choice. Every parent, every family, ought to be able to choose the education that is best for their children.

As public officials, it is our mission to ensure that all the children are educated well, The cornerstone of that is providing opportunities through fairly funded public schools.

Since it is our state's policy to ensure that our families have choices, the state should fund its mandate by funding these choices directly. HB 1 does that. It calls for an end to funding vouchers by the deduction method, by funding vouchers directly instead of deducting the amount from public school districts – the latter of which has been driving up our local property taxes.

More than that, HB 1 also addresses at long last the *DeRolph* decision finding unconstitutional the funding disparities between districts with high property values versus those with low property values.

HB 1 will improve the balance between state and local contributions to school funding. The Bill's strength in the new way of calculating the local capacity, together with improving the balance between state and local contributions to school funding.

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Together, this is critical for the financial well-being of our school district.

For our community, it would mean stability. That is important for mayors and other local officials like me, which is why I am appearing before you today.

Locally, I have to look at taxation as a whole. With the most recently passed levy, the City of University Heights will be receiving just \$10.25 for every hundred dollars collected in property taxes. Our residents express their concern to me about ever-increasing taxes, meanwhile our city has not raised taxes in over 14 years.

What we have had is four school levies on the ballot in four years, with two of them passing, the last one by just 145 votes. And still, it is not enough.

Predictability of local taxation will promote stability in the community, and allow individuals and businesses to better plan for the future, knowing that tax bills will remain generally consistent, rather than the constant asks for tax increases.

None of that is to say that new tax levies will completely go away. Since the late 1970s, House Bill 920 has locked in what is raised by every new levy. The amount collected remains fixed regardless of increases in property value, and regardless of inflation.

By passing HB 1, we would provide relief to residents in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District, and districts like ours. There would be better funding, and fewer levies with smaller asks. The result would be both stability and better funded public schools, while honoring the commitments the state has made to voucher programs by funding them directly.

Support of HB 1 means doing better – for the families, for the children, for our educators – in University Heights, in Cleveland Heights, and all across Ohio. It reduces the unfair tax burden placed on communities like ours. It restores funding to public schools. It honors our commitments.

I urge you to support the Resolution in Support of HB 1. Thank you.