



## **How the state could make effective use of the \$400 million in savings due to Medicaid expansion**

November 13, 2013

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Nov. 13 The Ohio Education Association issued the following news release:

First of all, we welcome a healthy debate on this subject. There are a host of needs that could be met with some or all of this money. We could rehire laid off police and firefighters. We could do more to help the elderly. We could also rehire laid off teachers. Let's talk about it.

We believe the needs of our public school students rank high on that list. State aid to local school districts is currently \$514 million less than what it was three years ago in the last year of the previous administration. The Governor and the legislature have passed the buck to local taxpayers and have forced them - where they are willing - to make up the difference.

As Innovation Ohio recently noted, there has been a nearly 30% increase in the number of school levies during Governor Kasich's tenure. Placing more of the burden of paying for our public schools on local taxpayers is unfair and unwise.

Let's stop the game of levy roulette at the local level, and let's have more dedicated state funding for our public schools. It hurts our students when the funding stream for our schools is less than reliable.

If the Governor and the legislature want to ease the tax burden on working families in Ohio, they could do so by providing more state aid to local school districts rather than initiating an across-the-board tax cut that would disproportionately favor those at the top of the income ladder.

We're pleased that some state lawmakers have in fact suggested there are better ways to use the \$400 million than pass another tax cut that would do little to help the people who need it most - middle class and lower income families.

Let's consider how the \$400 million could help students in local school districts and what the impact would be.

You have a sheet that shows the amount of money particular school districts would receive if the \$400 million were distributed through the same formula that was used by the legislature in the most recent budget. It's pretty clear from those numbers that this money would have far more than a "minimal impact" on local schools.

Here are a few examples of how the \$400 million could help our public school students -

- \* Expanding all-day Kindergarten or universal preschool would enable more economically disadvantaged students to come to school ready to learn.
- \* School security systems could be more easily upgraded.
- \* The technology gap could be closed, enhancing the prospects for better student outcomes.
- \* Other programs that have been cut in recent years could see funding restored.

I applaud Superintendent Sam Reynolds for speaking out on behalf of his students in the Manchester School District, and making a forceful case for the needs of his community. I encourage his colleagues across the state to do the same. State lawmakers need to hear their voices.

And finally, let me make a point about something the Governor and his legislative allies frequently invoke and that's the importance of making Ohio attractive to investors so our languishing economy can grow. Let's remember that part of what investors and the people who create jobs look for is a good public school system. That's why people buy homes and choose to raise their families in certain areas - because of the quality of the public schools. That's all the more reason why the state should be doing more - not less - to help our public schools in Ohio.

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