

A JOINT LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF HAMILTON COUNTY

- Cincinnati Public Schools | Deer Park Community City Schools | Finneytown Local Schools | Forest Hills Local Schools | Great Oaks Career Campuses | Hamilton County Educational Service Center | Indian Hill Exempted Village Schools | Lockland Local School District | Loveland City Schools | Madeira City Schools | Mariemont City Schools | Mount Healthy City Schools | North College Hill City Schools | Northwest Local Schools | Norwood City Schools | Oak Hills Local Schools | Princeton City Schools | Reading Community City Schools | Southwest Local Schools | St. Bernard - Elmwood Place City Schools | Sycamore Community City Schools | Three Rivers Local Schools | Winton Woods City Schools | Wyoming City Schools

November 7, 2025

Dear Hamilton County Residents,

As your local school superintendents and treasurers, we write to you not as politicians, but as fellow parents, neighbors, and stewards of the public education system in Hamilton County. We are writing because of the statewide effort to overhaul and, in some cases, eliminate property taxes and the devastating impact this would have on our districts, since a bulk of our operating budgets comes from local taxes.

We share your concern and frustration over rising property taxes. We must share the complete picture of *why* this is happening and what it means for the community services we all depend on.

Over time, Ohio lawmakers have shifted the property tax burden from businesses to homeowners by phasing out taxes on business property and limiting commercial valuations, leaving residential taxpayers to shoulder a larger share of local funding.

Here are the facts:

- Ohio's state share of K-12 education funding has fallen from 44.8% in 2002 to 33.5% today.
- Over the same period, Ohio's rank in state funding compared to other states dropped from 35th to 45th overall.
- The national average shows states fund about 45% of education costs.
- Local property taxes now provide 53.1% of Ohio's school funding. The state contributes 33.5% and the remaining 13.4% comes from federal and other local (non-property) sources.
- The state now provides \$2,672 less per student than the national average.
- Ohio ranks 20th in per-pupil spending overall, meaning we are not overspending but paying more locally instead of through state resources.

While the national average shows that states fund about 45% of education costs, Ohio now funds only 33.5%. That gap leaves communities like ours to carry the weight through local property taxes.

Property taxes fund more than schools

Proposals to drastically reduce or eliminate property taxes may sound appealing, but doing so would devastate the services that make Hamilton County a great place to live and raise families.

Consider what billions in lost local tax revenue would mean for our communities and our essential services, including:

- **Public schools** – classroom resources, school safety, and staff support
- **Emergency services** – police, fire, and EMS response when you call
- **Local infrastructure** – safe roads, bridges, and daily maintenance
- **Community programs** – parks, youth sports, and senior services

Every child in Hamilton County deserves the same opportunities we had growing up. Excellent teachers, safe schools, and learning experiences to help prepare them for the future.

A call for real solutions

We are not writing this letter to defend higher taxes. We write because Hamilton County residents and all Ohioans deserve *real, fair, and sustainable relief*, not quick fixes that would dismantle our schools and essential services.

Property tax reform must include relief for those who need it most:

- Enhanced property tax relief for seniors on fixed incomes
- Expanded exemptions for citizens with disabilities
- Strengthened homestead exemptions for low-income families

We also believe in local control and transparency, which means:

- Greater flexibility in structuring tax abatements and exemptions
- Allowing for local decisions to be made jointly with schools and all stakeholders
- Clear accountability and public transparency in granting tax incentives

The path forward requires collaboration among residents, educators, and policymakers to ensure Ohio funds education responsibly while creating genuine, sustainable property tax relief. Other states have found this balance, and we know that Ohio can too.

We invite you to stay informed, ask questions, and hold all levels of government accountable. The future of our children and the strength of Hamilton County depend on getting this right.

Thank you for your continued support of public education and for being a community that puts children first.

Sincerely,

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Megan Jackson, Treasurer
Hamilton County ESC

Shauna Murphy, Superintendent
Michael Gustin, Treasurer
Cincinnati Public School District

Jim Stoll, Superintendent
Jeff Lewis, Treasurer
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Anthony Smith, Superintendent
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Finneytown Local School District

Larry Hook, Superintendent
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Forest Hills Local School District

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Brian Rabe, CFO/Treasurer
Great Oaks Career Campuses

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