

## Westerville Area Chamber Business Advocacy Council Review of 2024 School Levy

The Business Advocacy Council reviewed the levy. Through the lens of how the levy affects local businesses, it was unanimously recommended by the BAC to the Chamber BOT to support the levy. At the August Board of Trustee meeting the board voted to approve the council's recommendation and support the levy.

Key Points in support of the Westerville City School District levy on the ballot Nov. 5, 2024:

- o Combined 1.66 mill Bond and 4.9 mill Operating
- o One vote for both bond and operating funds
- o Bond portion is no new millage - will keep constant what is in place
- o Operating 4.9 mills + New Bonds 1.66 mills minus Old Bonds 1.66 mills = 4.9 mills
- o Net Cost approximately \$171.50 (\$172 on ballot) annually per \$100k of property valuation (residential and commercial)
- Needs for operating dollars
  - o Federal funding (Covid dollars) has expired
  - o State Funding - reappraisals make the community look wealthier so the state shifts costs down to residents
  - o Inflation remains high – Revenue is dropping and as we are all experiencing expenses are increasing
  - o Getting 4 million less next year from state
  - o HB920 Reduction Factors (limits growth on voted levies)
  - o Increased needs for students
  - o The state only contributes .23 cents to the district per student for every \$1 it costs to educate students.

### Key Points for the Chamber supporting the levy:

1. **Investment in Local Economy and Workforce Development:** Supporting public schools is directly tied to local business success. The presentation demonstrated that the school district has been responsible with its funds despite external challenges like state funding reductions and inflation. By investing in the schools, we are ensuring that local businesses will have access to a well-educated, skilled workforce, which is essential for the economic health of Westerville.

2. **Property Values and Business Attraction:** Strong schools are critical for maintaining and increasing property values, which in turn attract businesses to the area. Without a successful school district, Westerville's appeal as a prime location for business headquarters, like DHL, Vertiv, and others, diminishes. Central Ohio's growth highlights the need for competitive educational facilities, and falling behind in school support could lead to a faster decline in both educational and business standards in the region.

3. **Addressing Workforce Mental Health:** Schools play a vital role in addressing mental health issues before students enter the workforce. With the increasing mental health struggles seen among the workforce, supporting the school levy ensures that students and future workforce receive the necessary support early on, leading to a healthier, more productive future workforce. This proactive approach benefits businesses by reducing potential future costs related to employee mental health issues and improving overall workplace productivity and morale.

**Recommendation:** Based on these points, the Business Advocacy Council presented their position to support the upcoming school levy, Issue 44 Franklin County (Delaware County does not have Issue numbers.) The Chamber Board has supported the council's recommendation to ensure continued economic growth, business attraction, a robust future workforce, and a vibrant quality of life. And noted the importance for the district to have measurements for progress and outcomes with the revised strategic plan.

A Q&A doc. can be found here: <https://www.westerville.k12.oh.us/resources/levy/levy-and-bond-issue-faq> Our community our schools link