

The Columbus Dispatch

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Tax abatements are handed out like candy in Columbus while CCS is underfunded | Letters

Letters to the Editor Columbus Dispatch

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Key Points

Here's why CCS doesn't have enough money.

Direct support professional are no angels

That's not what I said

Blame abatements

By focusing on [administrator salaries](#) in its recent coverage of [financial exigencies](#) within Columbus City Schools, the Dispatch invites readers to ask the wrong question about what's to blame for school closures on the horizon.

A better question would have been: Why are Columbus City Schools chronically underfunded in the first place?

Only a few years ago, we were debating whether Columbus schools could afford to [fully air condition](#) their

buildings, a conversation that took place against a backdrop of **\$146 million** in public funds spent on a new soccer stadium.

Meanwhile, for years the city has handed out property tax abatements with abandon, for real estate development in the Short North and other upscale locales.

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These abatements have **demonstrable consequences** for public school funding.

They also bring the city's priorities into focus: building shiny new venues for affluent White people while disregarding the needs of the children in Columbus City Schools, **about 80%** of whom are non-White.

It's shameful.

John M. Herbert, Columbus

They aren't angels

This is Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. It's a time to recognize the frontline professionals who make it possible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. In my more than 25 years working in this field, I've had the privilege of meeting countless direct support professionals. When people see them in action, they often say things like, "You're an angel," or "You're doing God's work." While those comments are meant as compliments, they miss the point.

Direct support professionals are not angels.

They are highly skilled professionals. They build relationships, teach skills and provide the support that make community life possible.

When we frame this work as charity instead of a profession, we unintentionally send a message that people with disabilities don't deserve the same professional respect and investment that others do. The truth is, the relationship between these professionals and those they support is the heart of this work.

And yet, direct support professionals remain undervalued and overlooked. Ohio made an important investment in wages through [House Bill 33](#) in 2023, but the workforce shortage remains a crisis. This week, we pause to say thank you — to the professionals who show up every day, who walk alongside people with disabilities and who make independence and inclusion possible.

And beyond this week, we must commit to ensuring that these professionals are supported, respected and fairly compensated for the essential role they play.

Pete Moore, president and CEO, Ohio Provider Resource Association

That's not what I said

In the Sept. 10 edition of The Columbus Dispatch's opinion section, [Mr. Mark Gavin, Sr., commented on my recent guest column](#) regarding the Mellon Foundation grant and the Christopher Columbus statue.

I certainly respect Gavin's opinions regarding the disposal of the statue, but I must correct one his statements.

I did not write that "the Italian community should have decided where to put the statue." My guest column stated, "The property would be purchased through fundraising efforts by the Italian committee *and a site and*

design would be mutually agreed upon by their committee and city officials.”

Opinion: [City failed Italian residents in Christopher Columbus statue home talks](#)

I would never have allowed for members of the Italian community to solely decide on the relocation of the statue.

I believe that is an important clarification.

Joe Motil, Columbus