

Testimony Before the House Finance Committee

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Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE)

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony before you. Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality seeks to bring the voice of low and middle income Ohioans to the Ohio legislative process. Today we are before you to speak on behalf of SB315.

We believe that SB315 is a step in the right direction in funding Public Transit. This one time funding request from the Ohio Department of Transportation would provide critical capital funding for our rural transit systems and additional relief to our urban systems. It is our hope that you accept this one time request so that we can begin the process of meeting the needs of those that are transit dependent and do not have a vehicle. This money will help address some of the long overdue capital needs of our smaller transit systems.

A recent report by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies concluded that 15.9% of all Ohioans live in poverty. 24.2% of children lack access to adequate food. 8.4% of seniors are in poverty. They stated that one of the largest contributors to the above numbers is the lack of transportation options in the state. The lack of options leaves individuals isolated and unable to obtain quality jobs and nutritious food. These statistics are alarming. If we are serious about addressing the needs of the poor and middle class, we must support greater transportation options such as the ones contained within this bill.

While this bill begins to address the needs of Ohioans by adding additional money to fund public transit, it's a far cry from what the Ohio Department of Transportation recommended in its own 2015 study that stated that the state should fund public transportation to the tune of \$125 million by 2025. Our current budget does not even meet 10% of the recommendation of that report.

Although we are months away from the FY 17/18 budget, we think it's important that we begin the conversation as to how we can get people to jobs, access to health care needs, and to eliminate poverty; one of the solutions starts today by supporting the passage of SB315. We urge you to pass SB315 and to consider future options as to how we can fund public transportation for the betterment of all Ohioans