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**OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 3—SEPTEMBER 20, 2017
TESTIMONY OF DENNIS R. HETZEL
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Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 3, which is known as the DataOhio Initiative. The DataOhio initiative could help make Ohio a leader in access to government information and transparency with positive ripples in areas ranging from business development and government efficiency to better journalism and citizen engagement. The key concept, in our view, is to standardize the way data is entered, stored and presented across multiple platforms and jurisdictions.

HB 3 would require the Auditor of State to develop uniform accounting procedures and charts that can be used by governmental bodies throughout Ohio. In addition to developing these guidelines, an expert board would be established to make recommendations to the General Assembly on future legislation to advance data storage and access in Ohio. Beyond the obvious benefits to anyone in government who develops and compares expenditures, this will help members of the public – be they everyday citizens, business owners or journalists -- understand how taxpayer dollars are being spent with greater precision and in less time. When I was an editor, I used to tell reporters that data doesn't necessarily answer questions, but good data helps you ask better questions. This is an excellent example of that proposition.

HB 3 also encourages—but does not require—governmental entities to post documents online in a machine readable and user searchable format, such as RDF, XML, or CSV. This should be supported. Documents are far more usable when they are available in formats that can be readily analyzed without having to engage in duplicate work such as re-keyboarding data. In many cases, the underlying formulas or other information in the source documents are significant.

HB 3 would establish www.data.ohio.gov, a website that would house accessible government data in the state. Many states and the federal government already have similar sites where data is compiled, aggregated and able to be compared and analyzed. This happens with varying degrees of ease, which is to be expected in the early stages of a big idea. Again, I could see many people, including journalists, making great use of this information.

We realize there are resource issues involving local government to resolve. As you consider this, note that one positive benefit will be to reduce staff time and expense related to public records requests. Once the transition is made to provide data to the public on the Internet in formats easy to search and compare, this will deflect many requests that now have to be handled manually, involving staff time and other expenses.

In summary, we believe that the DataOhio initiatives can help journalists do their jobs better, position Ohio more competitively and offer ongoing value to many other Ohio citizens and businesses. I want to thank Representatives Mike Duffey and Christina Hagan for their persistence on this issue. Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.