



State Representative Mike Duffey, 21<sup>st</sup> District

## **Sponsor Testimony HB 3 (Duffey, Hagan) – DataOhio**

Ohio House – Finance Committee  
September 20, 2017

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 3, also known as DataOhio.

I stand here before you today slightly embarrassed in that I think both Rep. Hagan and I were under the impression that HB3 was up for its 2<sup>nd</sup> hearing today, not it's first. It's easy to see how that could happen, as we were working on this legislation this session in the state budget and it previously passed this committee several times in previous general assemblies before stalling in the Senate.

As mentioned, this legislation, as HB 324, unanimously passed on the House floor two sessions ago. That bill, passing on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, arrived too late to pass the Senate in lame duck. Then it passed again unanimously last session as HB 130 by a vote of 96-0. So if you were around in May 2016, thank you.

On the positive side, many members of this House Finance committee voted “yes” on DataOhio both of the last two sessions. So again, thank you for your support in this committee. This legislation has been good government legislation, a bit wonky perhaps, and Rep. Hagan and I have taken it from a position several years ago when the municipal league and township association had concerns to today, where those organizations are now proponents in addition to the transparency advocates you might expect like the newspapers, think tanks, researchers, economists, etc.

The purpose served by this legislation is simple: it allows public record information in Ohio to become much easier to access for Ohio's citizens, government entities, researchers, journalists and entrepreneurs. It does this by establishing a convening board to discuss standards, publishing an easy-to-find website to disseminate information and by offering a small \$10,000 incentive grants to local governments.

DataOhio has four components that work together:

1. We will create a **collaborative board of public offices** (15 members with public comments) to meet several times per year to help establish **shared data standards and goals** with the expectation that if a public office posts data, it should strive to do so in an open format (non-proprietary, machine-readable). This expectation is expressed as an “opt in”, meaning it is not a mandate, but an expression of intent.
2. With the support of **Auditor Dave Yost**, we will develop **voluntary uniform financial standards** – similar to a “uniform charts of accounts” – for various public offices that lack uniform accounting definitions. These financial data standards would similarly be “opt in”, meaning not mandatory.
3. To make it even easier to organize and find the data you seek, we would also create a one-stop catalog of public data sets at **data.ohio.gov**. You can think of it as a Dewey decimal system for data. It would not necessarily “hold” the data, but rather organizes and “points” to it through links and other means.

Data.ohio.gov would also become a forum for tutorials, discussion and support tools and allow linked data to other states' portals ([data.ny.gov](http://data.ny.gov), [data.texas.gov](http://data.texas.gov), [data.hawaii.gov](http://data.hawaii.gov), [data.colorado.gov](http://data.colorado.gov), etc.)

4. Finally, because we are not mandating open data, **it is important to provide a “carrot” to local governments** – specifically cities, townships, counties and libraries – to complete a checklist of “beginner level” open data and if they do so, then they are eligible to receive a **\$10,000 grant**.

The case for open data at its broadest is not simply about good government for citizens, journalists and researchers. It is also about job creation, identification of waste, encouraging technology start-ups and helping ordinary Ohioans encounter less red tape in their search for information.

In the modern era, we take for granted our ability to search online for stock market performance charts, housing for sale or rent, weather forecasts, GPS maps, movie show times and much more. Yet all of these app-based services are essentially made possible through standardized open data in one form or another.

The following organizations have either endorsed DataOhio or testified as supportive interested parties:

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|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| * Auditor Dave Yost                  | * The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland | * David Landsbergen, OSU        |
| * State Librarian Beverly Cain       | * Greater Ohio                          | * Jason Seligman, Economist     |
| * Ohio Society of CPAs               | * Data Transparency Coalition           | * Brian Kelley, CIO of the Year |
| * Ohio Newspaper Association         | * The Sunlight Foundation               | * Gene Krebs, Former Rep.       |
| * The Buckeye Institute              | * OpenNEO                               | * Ohio Township Association     |
| * The Center for Community Solutions | * MORPC                                 | * Ohio Municipal League         |
|                                      | * Ned Hill, OSU Economist               |                                 |

Every one is searching for accurate information without too much hassle. And yet, hassle is what we get in many cases – either because of technology challenges, an absence of standards, or navigational issues.

An ordinary public records request in one city might return to the requestor in the form of a photocopy of a spreadsheet, or a PDF, or a PowerPoint. There is no rhyme or reason why it comes to you in that format necessarily. And once you have it, the information is not always communicated with the same meaning. For instance, accounting labels among different departments or positions may be different while describing the same line item, or even labeled the same for different line items. It can get confusing.

All of this hassle results in lost time and money. It unnecessarily occupies resources: re-typing data into electronic format, translating numbers to like-to-like definitional standards, searching drop-down menus for the information you seek, calling officials on the phone to explain your request and so on.

So that's why DataOhio is important. We are taking data that is hodge-podge, disorganized and difficult to use and we are essentially fulfilling a public library function for it. We are convening the many public offices that are responsible for it, telling them to get in a room together to work out standards, to speak the same language in accounting, to share their data with each other more openly and rewarding them.

Sadly, there is little incentive for many in government to better coordinate data right now. Sharing information benefits many, yet the work may be done individually with no guarantee that if a public office shares information about itself, others will return the favor.

Ohio is frankly behind the curve on this effort. From red states like Texas, Utah and Oklahoma to blue states like New York, Illinois and Hawaii, an increasing number of states are pursuing open data policies. And at the federal level, it was Ohio's U.S. Senator Rob Portman that sponsored the DATA Act of 2014, which was bipartisan legislation with Senator Warner of Virginia to standardize federal spending data.

This is an area where state government can help simply by serving as a beacon. Public offices may choose whether or not they want to follow these standards but if they do, we will all benefit from the result.

As I believe you already know, this legislation is entirely permissive. Cities, townships, counties and others are not required to follow open data standards, but by offering them a coordination effort to do so, we make it possible for it to happen more easily.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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