



Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

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Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 3
Ohio House Finance Committee
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Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the benefits and importance of House Bill 3, which encourages data sharing by public agencies, supports their ability to do so, and ensures online access to that data for all Ohioans.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is a voluntary association of more than 60 local governments and regional organizations in the 15-county Columbus Region. Also known as MORPC, we are both a governmental entity and a non-profit organization; and we serve as the metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission for Central Ohio. In these varied roles, we support our local communities across a broad range of issues, including energy and air quality, land use and sustainability, and transportation system planning and funding. One of the key underpinnings of our work supporting communities across the region is our access to and expertise about quality public data.

While data creation, aggregation, and analysis have always been key components of what we do, the proliferation of data-enabled devices and exponential increase in the amount of available data in recent years have led to a more concerted effort to position MORPC as a data leader for the Central Ohio Region. An example of this is our establishment of a Regional Data Advisory Committee last year to advise MORPC commissioners and staff on issues pertaining to regional data collaboration, integration, innovation, and communication.

I am sharing information about the work that MORPC performs with data to emphasize that the approach laid forth in Representatives Duffey's and Hagan's bill for coordinated, managed, and accessible information are prevalent at all levels of government.

In addition, MORPC promotes making public data freely accessible in open formats, but the practice of accessing and sharing data can present challenges for communities of all sizes, but particularly for smaller communities with limited resources and technical expertise. As introduced, House Bill 3 would address several of the needs that MORPC also works with local communities to overcome in their efforts to provide open data:

- the need for data standardization;
- a centralized location to provide and access open data;
- expert guidance on data policies and procedures; and,
- financial assistance in making their information available.

We applaud the forethought included in House Bill 3 to provide a multi-faceted approach to implementing a statewide open data initiative.

Regarding the composition of the DataOhio board, we respectfully request that the committee considers amending the required designees to also include one member who represents regional planning commissions, metropolitan planning organizations, or regional councils of governments, to be appointed by the Ohio Association of Regional Councils. The unique regional perspective and planning responsibilities of such agencies means that they are frequently the creators or custodians of key public datasets, such as transportation networks, population and employment projections, and regional air and water quality information. Additionally, as previously stated, MORPC and our peer organizations across the state are engaged in initiatives that mirror those included in House Bill 3, and we believe that representation on the DataOhio board will facilitate coordinated and mutually-supportive efforts going forward.

This bill represents a proactive and strategic approach to promoting transparency, increasing efficiency, and building the technical capacity of state and local governments. We

applaud the efforts of Representatives Duffey and Hagan to continue to bring the topic of open data sharing to the forefront through their legislation.