

Chairman Ryan, Vice-Chair Lipps, Ranking-Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee,

I'm writing today to support HB 695 and the Rural Industrial Park Loan program given our situation here and what this program could do to greatly assist our much needed, long overdue water and sewer project along with land acquisition for an industrial park/retail area in one of smallest rural areas in SE Ohio. Despite a tough scenario and other factors, we continue to pursue both.

Our predecessors on the MCIC board in late 1960's through the early 80's were protectionist-like business people. My high school class (1977) was the largest, graduating 313 at Morgan High. The 2018 MHS class graduated 147 and we have 127 enrolled for kindergarten this fall. Thus, a slow downward slope continues. However, our current MCIC board members, our school system, and other business/civic leaders are attempting to reverse the trend. We now have job shadowing opportunities with our high school and area businesses, 37 college credit plus classes at MHS, and a superb "Career Tech" program at MHS with the assistance of Zane State and Washington State.

The late 1950's through the early 1980's we had jobs, jobs, jobs; coal mines, 5 manufactures with 2000 employees, automobile dealerships, sawmills, and retail was still on Main Street. This has all changed. The world, our country, and our state changed. Our county did not. However, the slow downward trend and the lack of an appropriate infrastructure kept this area from really keeping up.

Statistically, the US economy is booming with the tax cuts and consumer confidence at an all time high. US housing starts this past May were the highest since 2007. Rising e-commerce sales, which grew more than 15% in 2017, to \$448 billion will continue to impact smaller communities. And yet, following last's year's passage of the US tax cuts, small business profitability in May hit its highest reading since the records started in 1973. Small business expansion were the most optimistic as well.

That's the focus: Small business expansion. To do so, communities have to have a plan and a plan that includes the appropriate infrastructure, which means there has to be a source for the funds necessary to build the projects. The Rural Industrial Park Loan Program is the source.

Typically, smaller rural areas experience the "lag effect" though where it takes several months if not years to feel the positive shifts due to the lack of an economic development group sensitivity and foresight or lack of the appropriate infrastructure to compete. Ohio is lagging for smaller communities, not just infrastructure but broadband as well. That's another possibility the State needs to address, sooner than later.

Given our situation, the time has come to reinvigorate small rural areas such as ours with the Rural Industrial Park Loan/Grant program.

Finally, in 1904, two men from the Dayton area took their bicycle parts, a small motor, and what looked like kite supplies to Kitty Hawk, and flew the first plane for several seconds. Then, just a short 65 years later, we put a man on the moon. And yet, our area still cannot fund a much needed, and long overdue water and sewer project for small business expansion opportunities? It is time for a change, and this is why I urge your support for HB 695.

Thank you Chairman Ryan, Vice-Chair Lipps, Ranking-Member Cera, and members of the Finance Committee for your time and I urge your favorable consideration of HB 695

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