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Chairman Ryan, Vice Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to come and testify in support of HB 654.

The purpose of HB 654 is to assist the thirty-one communities in Ohio that have been placed on the State Auditor's Fiscal Distress List. Under HB 654 these communities would receive money from the Budget Stabilization Fund in an amount equal to what they would have been allocated under Local Government Fund levels from Fiscal Year 2008.

Since 2011, over \$1.7 billion dollars has been cut in local government funding. This has resulted in many communities having to increase local taxes and cut spending to make up for these shortages. But for 31 communities these budget cuts have had even more severe economic consequences.

In these 31 communities, even though residents are paying more in local taxes they are seeing substantial reductions in essential safety services. Like Niles, Ohio, who has increased their own taxes by \$2 million dollars, but still had to make major cuts to its police force.

Residents in these communities also see cuts being made to basic infrastructure repair and upkeep. Like Massillon, Ohio, who needed to initiate a \$300,000 street lighting fee from tax payers. And Maple Heights, who can't afford to repaint lines on city streets or collect yard waste despite trying to raise local taxes four times.

While the State is sitting on a \$2 billion surplus, no Ohioans should be concerned for their safety and welling being because of inadequate funding to their local government. The State has a responsibility to stabilize these thirty-one communities from the harm, and the Budget Stabilization Funds are intended to be a resource for Ohio and Ohioans in times of economic distress. And it is clear that communities are in distress.

By utilizing 1% of the money the State has stockpiled, we can help restore these communities and provide some much needed economic stability for the citizens that call these communities home.