



**AMERICANS FOR  
PROSPERITY®**  
OHIO

HOUSE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 761  
Wednesday, November 28, 2018

Members of the committee—good morning. My name is Micah Derry and I am the State Director of Americans for Prosperity-Ohio. On behalf of our AFP activists and citizen leaders in Ohio, I wish to thank Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Reineke, and Ranking Member Clyde for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 761.

AFP-Ohio is one of 36 state chapters nationwide aiming to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies of a free and open society at the local, state, and federal level. Our grassroots volunteers advocate for limited government public policies that enable people to work hard, provide for their families, and achieve the American dream. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's hearing and to express my support for this important legislation.

Americans for Prosperity seeks to advance public policies that empower people to live their best lives while limiting the government's ability to interfere. Part of this mission is identifying and championing policies that aim to hold our government and public officials accountable to taxpayers. This simple bill does precisely that.

Earlier this year AFP-OH opposed legislation that allowed elected officials to hold their elected position where they could levy lodging taxes and then in turn also serve on a Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) and make decisions regarding the expenditure of those same taxes with any less transparency than they could make expenditures in their primary position, such as county commissioner or township trustee.

Our opposition was not to the idea of public servants taking extra responsibilities upon themselves, especially in more rural jurisdictions where there may be a shortage of individuals who are able to serve the public in this manner. Our opposition was because the bill, as it was

passed, violated the principle of openness and whether intentional or not creates a perverse incentive for elected officials to levy taxes and spend public monies with limited accountability.

Specifically, HB 761 aims to require that CVBs whose Boards have elected officials as members disclose to the public all Board meeting minutes, vendor payment records, and other financial information records. Additionally, it allows for more stringent transparency measures should a county or municipality call for them, while exempting CVBs whose Board membership includes no public officials.

In less than two pages, this bill addresses our concerns in the legislation passed earlier this year and serves as a powerful message that taxpayers deserve respect and an accountable government.

Fortunately, HB 761 is a step in the right direction toward such accountability. By requiring CVBs whose Boards include elected officials to publicly disclose all financial information, vendor payments, and meeting minutes, taxpayers can begin to have a clearer understanding of where their tax dollars are going and how they are being spent. Aside from addressing the primary problem of a dearth of transparency, the bill also acts as a hedge against future potential corporate welfare wherein government uses its authority to pick winners and losers without the scrutiny of taxpayers.

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Louis Brandeis once said of government accountability that “sunlight [...] is the best disinfectant.” It is to that standard that HB 761 will help hold some of Ohio’s public officials while putting in place an important check on a state government. This bill stands as a testament to the values of Americans for Prosperity and its activists, specifically that each of us deserves to have a government that is held accountable for its actions. As such, I am proud to support this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the chance to speak this afternoon, and I look forward to addressing any questions or concerns the Committee may have.

Micah Derry  
State Director  
Americans for Prosperity-Ohio

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*

