

November 26, 2018

Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 720, which would require voter approval of any increase in the rate of a county sales tax.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Doug Barry, I am a small business owner, elected township trustee, and recent candidate for Montgomery County Commissioner. My experience has given me a lot of experience not only in the private sector, but as well in the public sector. I am here in support of HB 720, not because my local government did something wrong but because the public's voice needs to be heard on such an important decision.

As the owner of BarryStaff for over 20 years, the decision our county commissioners made to increase our local sales tax will have a lasting negative impact on my business. In Montgomery County we faced a \$9 million dollar budget shortfall. This increase will raise over \$19 million and make Montgomery County the 2nd or 3rd highest tax county in the state of Ohio. Our commissioners have already stated the extra \$10 million has already been spent. We will continue to see the population drain from the county and businesses leaving for lower taxing counties.

As a Miami Township Trustee for over 5 years we faced similar budget shortfalls and chose to look at doing government differently rather than raise taxes. In my jurisdiction we have seen over \$90 million in economic development and continue to have a balanced budget. Unlike the county, we have to put levy's on the ballot for the voters to decide. All local governments and school districts must do the same to increase taxes. This forces us to be prudent with tax payer dollars and use the levy tool as a last resort.

I led the referendum effort in Montgomery County to get this placed on the ballot. We only had 30 days to get 13,000 valid signatures. Which, everyone here has had to get a petition signed and you know we really needed about 20,000 to ensure we met the threshold. We had hundreds of volunteers from both sides of the political spectrum. Most people didn't even know the county commissioners raised the sales tax. Not from any fault of the commission, but most people are not engaged with government until a week or so before an election. We had many challenges in this 30 day process. First we had to get the language from the resolution to file the referendum. Next we had to contend with 4th of July holiday to contend with, and finally the organization to get materials printed and people organized to start getting signatures. We were unsuccessful in getting the signatures needed simply because we ran out of time.

Our government is for the people and by the people, therefore we should not be afraid to put important tax increase measures like the one Montgomery County did this past summer on the ballot and let the voters decide. It should not be left up to 3 people. I appreciate your time and would be happy to answer any questions you may.