

DATE: May 16, 2017

TO: Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Mark A. Thomas, Belmont County Commissioner

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 105

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and Distinguished Members of the Ways and Means Committee.

My name is Mark A. Thomas and I am in my fourth term as a Belmont County Commissioner. I am very grateful for the opportunity to briefly speak to you today to give proponent testimony House Bill 105.

As you all may be aware, Belmont County is the epicenter of current oil and gas activity and we are embracing a very nice boost in our local economy. While we remain cautiously optimistic about the future success of Ohio's shale industry, we too are facing a myriad of infrastructure issues regarding it. Specifically, we have increased demand on our water and sewerage services along with road and bridge demands and we simply do not have the funding to address all of these issues. While we, through our County Engineer, are continually entering into Road Use Maintenance Agreements(RUMAs), they do not fully make the county whole once these companies quit using our roads for their trucks and drilling well equipment. Our roads and bridges were not built to handle this heavy equipment and many roads are being damaged as a result of the same. Additionally, we have increased water and sewerage costs for water and sewer line maintenance, repair and

upgrades. We struggle with these company demands when we cannot even extend waterlines to all of our residents.

In Belmont County, we have identified \$28.8 million dollars in infrastructure upgrades, which include, but are not limited to, approximately \$15 million dollars in immediate road maintenance, repair and paving. Our annual budget is around \$22 million dollars and the county engineer does not have sufficient budget funding to apportion a part of it to road paving. Through the passage of House Bill 105, Belmont County would be an 'eligible county' under Section 321.50 of the Ohio Revised Code. At that point, the oil and gas infrastructure fund would be created to help us effectuate a plan to reduce some of the above-mentioned issues.

In closing, for Belmont County to continue to grow, we desperately need a portion of these severance tax monies. We must develop a long-term, viable and sustainable economy, not only for eastern Ohio and the state of Ohio. As Belmont County grows, so does the state and we need to remain partners in many respects. Our continued success is dictated by our financial ability to provide the infrastructure necessary for economic growth. More importantly, our economic survival depends upon our financial ability to continue to be a host county of the booming shale industry. We respectfully request your support of House Bill 105 and allow impacted counties like ours the opportunity for funding commensurate with increasing service demands. Belmont County's future, along with many other eastern Ohio counties, have a great opportunity for incredible economic successes, which will ultimately help the state of Ohio.

Again, thank you for this unique opportunity to speak to the committee today and I am happy to answer any questions any of you may have regarding my testimony.