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Testimony by Franklin County Auditor Clarence E. Mingo, II before the Ohio House of Representatives Ways & Means Committee in support of House Bill 513

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee, my name is Clarence Mingo and I am the Franklin County Auditor. I am here today to testify on behalf of myself and on behalf of the County Auditors' Association of Ohio as a proponent of House Bill 513.

The Homestead Exemption is a long-standing benefit to seniors in Ohio. It allows for a decrease in real property taxes to those seniors and disabled residents who qualify. In recent years, this benefit has been enhanced to allow for an even larger decrease in taxes to our disabled veterans. I advocated on behalf of this change in 2014, and in that same year, this deserved tax break became law. This newer property tax break has assisted many of Ohio's disabled veterans.

Earlier this year I reached out to Representatives Andrew Brenner and Tim Ginter with a proposal to provide an enhanced Homestead Exemption to surviving spouses of peace officers, firefighters and emergency medical personnel killed in the line of duty. That proposal is now House Bill 513 and its purpose is to honor the life of the first-responders and aid their spouses during their most difficult times.

I announced publicly on February 8, 2018 that we would be working on this bill. Sadly, just two days later, terrible events unfolded in the City of Westerville. Two of Westerville's finest lost their lives while carrying out their duties as peace officers. The support that flooded in from around the state and throughout Westerville was awe-inspiring. Still, more must be done. It is our duty as public officials to aid in that community's recovery.

House Bill 513 would be a tangible benefit to families that are impacted by such tragedy. Surviving spouses would receive a \$50,000 exemption on the market value of their real property for tax purposes. For example, in the City of Columbus that would currently be an annual reduction in property taxes of \$1,060. In the City of Westerville, it would currently be a reduction of \$1,336. This is a true benefit that will be meaningful to those surviving spouses.

Throughout my career, both in the military and as the Franklin County Auditor, I have advocated on behalf of our citizens. I believe that the passage of House Bill 513 will be a truly meaningful benefit to the families of those who have proudly and profoundly served our communities as brave first responders. I ask for the favorable passage of House Bill 513 by the House Ways & Means Committee as not only good public policy but also as a tribute to those who serve us on a daily basis.

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.