



## **Sponsor Testimony**

**Representative Dave Greenspan**

**House Bill 311**

Chair Wiggam, Vice-Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 311 – which provides, on a permissive basis, the opportunity for county governments to request the establishment of a County Inspector General’s office to investigate fraud, waste and corruption.

Under this bill, county boards of commissioners will be able to request, by resolution, the appointment of a County Inspector General. The County Inspector General would provide the same function as the State Inspector General, but at the county level, allowing Ohio’s counties the same processes of review and oversight that state agencies currently have. Among the duties given to a County IG under the bill are receiving ethics complaints regarding those agencies’ operations, conducting ethics investigations of the management and operation of county agencies, reporting suspected crimes or wrongdoings committed by county officers or employees, and preparing reports of investigations upon their completion.

The most important part of the office of Inspector General, whether at the state or county level, is its independence - independence in hiring, independence in firing, independence in oversight, and independence in funding. House Bill 311 addresses these issues by creating an independent State Commission for County Inspector General Services, consisting of the Ohio Attorney General, the Auditor of State, the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer, and the Lieutenant Governor. The commission would be responsible for approving, appointing, overseeing and terminating County Inspectors General. Additionally, funding for Inspector General services is protected by provisions outlined in the bill to ensure that the appropriate financial resources are available for proper investigations.

Throughout the drafting process, I have been working extensively with the Auditor, the Attorney General, and the State Inspector General and their offices to help fine-tune this important piece of legislation. I am grateful to all of the parties we have worked with for their support. Inspector General Meyer has publicly stated that he believes in the mission of all Inspectors General to promote transparency and efficiency in government, and is encouraged to see this bill expanding that mission to county and local governments. Likewise, Auditor Faber highlighted this creation of a formal process to select qualified and trustworthy inspectors as the first step toward a more accountable and responsible county government. By adding checks and balances through an optional County Inspector General, we are able to benefit the taxpayers and improve our communities.

Elected officials and other public servants are entrusted with ensuring that programs, services and projects are performed and implemented with highest level of integrity. This bill, while permissive in its implementation, is simply designed to provide a standardized protocol should a county wish to engage in Inspector General services.

I appreciate the opportunity to present House Bill 311 for the committee's consideration, and I am available to answer questions you may have.