



**Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC)
Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 264
May 27, 2020**

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee: thank you for allowing OARC to submit written testimony in support of HB 264, bipartisan legislation that would provide a critical refinancing tool for local governments with OWDA loans, saving them precious resources.

The Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) represents the state's 24 councils of government and regional planning commissions that provide transportation, economic development, air quality and water quality planning for regional areas across the state. OARC members coordinate and work to streamline services at the regional level, acting as stewards of the state's resources. Over 1,500 municipalities, villages, townships and counties are served by regional councils.

Six of OARC's member agencies serve as state designated Areawide Agencies that work with the Ohio EPA to prepare and implement federally mandated water quality management plans across their respective regions. The Areawides also work on broader water quality planning, including watershed and stormwater management. To assist the Areawides with that process, local governments must create plans for sewage disposal system management. These local governments are critical partners for the Areawides as they consider the broader water quality picture in their regions.

As such, OARC supports efforts like the one proposed in HB 264 that help local governments obtain more economical financing on projects that will improve water management. OWDA offers local governments loans for planning and design or construction of water supply or distribution facilities, wastewater treatment and collection facilities, stormwater facilities or solid waste facilities. With interest rates on these five- to thirty-year loans set at the time of loan approval, local governments could at any point be financed at an interest rate higher than what is currently available. In a time where local budgets are already significantly strapped, seemingly small funding fixes matter greatly to local governments. OARC believes that its member governments should be able to take advantage of the best financing OWDA is able to offer them.

In conclusion, OARC stands strongly behind the coalition of groups and political leadership across our state who see improving Ohio's water quality as an absolutely critical statewide goal. To that end, our association is supportive of commonsense actions like HB 264 that make reaching that goal more financially feasible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.