

House Sponsor Testimony – HB 51

Good morning Chairman Anielski, Vice Chairman Hambley, ranking Member Bishoff, and members of the State and Local Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 51. I also want to thank you for your support last General Assembly when an earlier version of this bill came before the House.

Transparency. Accountability. Efficiency. These are the words that should describe government. This is what HB 51 aims at.

HB 51 creates a process which requires state agencies to seek affirmation from the legislature every four years in order to continue operating. Currently, the legislature has the power of the purse over state agencies. Historically our review of state agencies is done within the budget process. Budget time constraints make this task difficult. On February 1, Director Keen stood before the finance committee and told us that the budget put forth by the Governor was “the result of work performed over many months by thousands of knowledgeable and dedicated state employees.” In contrast, each chamber in the legislature is given mere weeks to review and analyze the Governor’s proposals. Under HB 51, the Senate President and Speaker of the House will designate standing committees whose responsibility over the entire two-year biennium will be to review a limited subset of state agencies and ensure that they are remaining faithful to their legislative authority and are not imposing unnecessary burdens on Ohioans.

Under HB 51, every agency will be evaluated under a series of performance factors and customer service standards every four years by standing committees to ensure that our government is operating at 21st Century efficiency levels and not creating an undue burden on taxpayers of Ohio.

HB 51 is a necessary measure to restrain government in an area that continually grows. The legislature funds state agencies and we owe it to our constituents to guarantee that they are not impeding growth, overregulating our economy, or operating outside the bounds of the law. This bill will also allow us to allocate funds more appropriately and responsibly. Through this process we can learn whether a particular agency is being over funded or underfunded and adjust funding measures accordingly. We can also better police agencies and their use of licensure requirements that often work to impede the free market and block people out of the labor force, which disproportionately hurts those with low and moderate income and artificially raises costs. Any progress on this issue is a victory for the working men and women of Ohio.

HB 51 reestablishes the proper relationship between state agencies and the legislature. Agencies rely upon the legislature for their funding and for their power. This bill is a safeguard of our citizens' liberties against encroachments from government. It will be incumbent upon state agencies to explain their actions and their necessity.

HB 51 is not a vehicle for dismantling all state agencies. The bill's objective is to streamline and modernize government, align agency operations with state public policy, while making sure that agencies are remaining true to their established purpose. The implementation of this bill will not result in the elimination of all state agencies, rather, it will see to it that the agencies, boards, and commissions are operating efficiently on behalf of taxpayers.

HB 51's purpose is to protect the tax payers of our state from waste, to reassert legislative authority and make state government more efficient, and to empower Ohioans to prosper. These should be the goals of all state legislators.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today on HB 51. I would be happy to answer any questions.