



JOSH MANDEL
STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

**Ohio House of Representatives
State and Local Government Committee
House Bill 40 Proponent Testimony
Deputy Treasurer Seth Metcalf
February 23, 2017**

Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Bishoff, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee – good morning it is a pleasure to appear before you. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Treasurer Josh Mandel to express his support and to ask for your thoughtful consideration of House Bill 40. This bill mirrors House Bill 46 of the 131st General Assembly and House Bill 175 of the 130th General Assembly. House Bill 46 passed unanimously out of committee and the chamber floor and House Bill 175 garnered 86 affirmative votes on the chamber floor. I also want to thank Representative Dever, Representative Greenspan, and their co-sponsors for re-introducing this important legislation.

In the Treasurer's office, we believe that it is important for Ohioans to have the ability to follow their hard-earned tax dollars and hold public officials accountable. Shining sunlight on decisions made by state bureaucracies allows taxpayers to track spending priorities and help root out waste, fraud and abuse.

House Bill 40 is part of a national movement to increase government transparency and accountability, and builds on initiatives that our office previously launched to shine sunlight on state finances. These initiatives include hosting searchable state worker and local education employee salaries online, displaying interactive state owned property maps, opening the books on county investment reports, and partnering with the State Library of Ohio to present an online compilation of Annual Reports published by the Treasurer's office since the early 1800's.

The Treasurer launched OhioCheckbook.com in December of 2014 and this transparency initiative puts checkbook level state spending online for the first time in Ohio history. We believe this is the most sophisticated and comprehensive online database in the country. OhioCheckbook.com includes the following:

- More than 9 Fiscal Years worth of data
- More than 155 million spending transactions
- Totaling more than \$574 billion
- More than 5.4 billion pieces of spending information

Since the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, residents from across our great state have had access to a fully searchable database of state expenditures. Anyone with an internet connection is able to easily search and sort billions of dollars of state spending information available at their fingertips. Ohioans are able to drill down and view important details such as the amount of an expenditure, the date it was paid, to whom the expenditure was made, and the agency that made the expenditure.

In 2014, Ohio was ranked 46th in the country for transparency by the US Public Interest Research Group (US PIRG). As a result of the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio was ranked number 1 in the country for transparency in both 2015 and 2016.

House Bill 40 would ensure that OhioCheckbook.com remains online after Treasurer Mandel leaves office so Ohioans continue to have access to this unprecedented and nationally recognized level of transparency. Currently there is no guarantee that the next Treasurer will choose to maintain the website.

Transparency is not a partisan issue, it is a good government issue. A diverse coalition of groups including The Ohio Newspaper Association, The Buckeye Institute, The Ohio Public Interest Research Group, Common Cause Ohio, The Sunlight Foundation and The Ohio Society of CPAs support our transparency efforts. Our office is proud to partner with Representative Dever and Representative Greenspan to further this important initiative.

During sponsor testimony earlier this week, several questions were asked regarding our local government checkbook initiative. Treasurer Mandel believes that transparency should be available to all local governments and citizens. This program is voluntary, free, and easy to implement. To date we have 1042 local government and school partners committed to OhioCheckbook.com out of the approximately 4000 local governments and schools in Ohio.

To be clear, House Bill 40 does not address the local government checkbook initiative. If this committee would like to consider including the local government checkbook initiative in the bill we would be happy to discuss, but our office would like the initiative to remain voluntary for local governments and schools.

Treasurer Mandel believes that when you give citizens the tools to better track government spending, more responsible decisions will be made. This legislation is just one more way to shine sunlight on government, so that taxpayers can follow their hard-earned tax dollars and hold public officials accountable. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.