

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Terhar, Ranking Minority Member Williams and members of the Committee. My name is Bill Wade and I am the superintendent of Kirtland Local Schools in Lake County.

On behalf of our school district I am here today to oppose Sub. HB 343 as it is currently drafted. Ohio's current property valuation and tax system has been effective for many years. The Board of Revisions is already in place and provides necessary checks in balances. From our perspective the most important aspect of this proposal is consistent and equal application of the property tax collection. This bill in its present form, however, has the potential to politicize the process and opens the door to selective enforcement as Boards would be asked if a proposed tax should be pursued. This selective enforcement will not only negatively impact the school district, but also the residential and commercial taxpayer. This is because any taxpayer whose property values are accurate will pay more than their fair share of taxes, subsidizing the lower taxes paid by property owners whose properties are undervalued. In a time where it is already difficult to secure revenues with the current funding system any adverse impact on the revenue of a district on an approved millage should be carefully considered; particularly one that has the ability to adversely impact those citizens whose property values are accurate.

Rather than putting Boards in these situations I would suggest it should be the Boards responsibility to create and oversee a policy that requires equal and consistent application. Sub. HB 343 could be adjusted to require school boards to create a policy which sets parameters for when a challenge can be enacted, what percent change would trigger a challenge, and a requirement for board notification on when such challenges have occurred. This would provide direction to the superintendent and treasurer of expectations and the taxpayers would be assured of fairness and equality in the actions the district takes. Our goal in any challenge is to ensure the interests of the community are met and we base this on fair market value of the sale of properties, typically commercial properties, in the area. We look at it as our responsibility to all our taxpayers to monitor the revenue of the district, while making sure we protect those property owners whose values are accurate to ensure they do not pay more than their fair share of our approved millage rates. Living within a set of clear expectations is reasonable and only helps ensure a goal of consistent and equal application of the property tax collection is achieved across the state.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. We urge you to reject Sub. HB 343 in its current form, or modify it to include the suggestions I made here today. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to address your questions.