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OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 62

JULIE EHEMANN
SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
February 27, 2019

Good day Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Julie Ehemann. I am one of the Commissioners from Shelby County and I am also serving as the President to the Board of CCAO. I have served in an elected position in local government for 25 years.

Today I would like to address House Bill 62 which would increase Ohio's gasoline tax by 18 cents per gallon and would be adjusted annually for inflation. CCAO supports Governor DeWine in this initiative. We have been concerned for a number of years to the growing needs of our State's infrastructure and to the lack of funding committed to addressing this need. With the end of the revenue from the turnpike bonds, this issue will only be magnified at all levels of government. This proposal in HB 62 will help counties address critical needs in our transportation system, including over 1,800 bridges that are eligible for immediate replacement and another 6,000 that are eligible for repair. Our counties would very much welcome and be able to utilize an additional \$1.7 million each if the gas tax is increased.

You have already heard from several counties in regards to the impacts of the shortfalls in revenue as it relates to transportation infrastructure. In my own county we have been supplementing the State's portion of tax dollars with revenue from our local sales tax. This is money that would have been welcomed for other priorities but was diverted to help this unmet need. Since 1999, Shelby County has invested over \$43 million dollars of local revenue to supplement state dollars. With Shelby County having 383 miles of roads to maintain, 333 bridges and over 1600 culverts, we have been able to ensure we do not have any closed bridges. Unfortunately that means we still have bridges with load limits which affects the movement of goods. Using calculations from my Engineer we are still unable to maintain an appropriate paving cycle and work to leverage other funds. We are just beginning a rehab project of a local bridge near our county's largest middle school. It took 6 years to finalize funding and receive permits for this \$3 million project. The reality is counties throughout the state are currently not able to do projects that are long overdue.

In reading our local papers I noted that a vehicle driving 15,000 miles per year, getting 30 miles to the gallon would pay an additional \$90 per year. This user fee seems quite reasonable when compared to the costs of repairing a vehicle damaged by one of the many potholes in our road.

While an increase in the gas tax is a good start, it should not be looked at as the only answer. We would also like to see a long-term solution added to this initiative and encourage this committee to explore all options available. It is important to consider expanding a version of some user fee to address electric and other energy efficient vehicles so that all users are paying a portion of the road maintenance costs.

It is clear that Ohio must improve and expand its transportation infrastructure to meet the economic challenges of the 21st Century, and Ohio's counties are committed to partnering with the state to make this happen. CCAO will look to continued participation as our options are investigated.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.