



UNIVERSITY
HEIGHTS

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**University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 310
Ohio House Finance Committee
June 3, 2020**

Chairman Oelslager, Chairman Callendar, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the Finance Committee to speak in favor of Senate Bill 310.

My name is Michael Dylan Brennan, and I am the Mayor of University Heights (home of John Carroll University) in Cuyahoga County. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected University Heights.

Our community of 13,000 has a fire department that has had to transport suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases. As of May 26, 2020, we have responded to 33 suspected or confirmed cases. Of these, 25 resulted in transport to the hospital. The COVID-19 transports, whether confirmed or merely suspected, require the use of masks, gowning, and complete sanitation of the ambulance involved.

While the pandemic has required us to increase our services to the community, we are simultaneously facing an income tax collection shortfall right as our residents and shared constituents need us the most. For the month of May, Regional Income Tax Authority forwarded us just \$450,000, half of what our city received in May 2019. We started 2020 with a balanced budget, but now we project a \$2 million shortfall in our income tax revenue. Our revenue for operating our city has decreased while our costs have increased – especially as our zip code (44118) is a hotspot for COVID-19 cases.

Our Fire Chief coordinates with Cuyahoga County for the acquisition and distribution of PPE for the Heights cities: University Heights, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and East Cleveland. For our city alone, he projects our need to purchase an additional \$150,000 worth of PPE to get us through this year. We are all too confident that we will need it, yet there is hesitation to commit to the expense until we know that financial relief is on its way.

Our first responders are on the front line of the pandemic. We must protect them as they work to serve our ill residents. It is not optional, but it comes with a price tag that

is particularly burdensome, given the income tax collection shortfall. That is why SB 310 is so imperative.

While the \$370,000 projected for University Heights under SB 310 does not bridge the \$2 million shortfall we anticipate, and while it may not serve as revenue replacement as such under the terms of the CARES Act, it would help cities like University Heights keep first responders responding to COVID-19 cases. There are no alternatives to our first responders. There is no other ambulance company that will show up if we do not. To do without is truly to be without.

This is an issue that does not affect just University Heights, but also local governments throughout the State of Ohio. This directly impacts local municipalities that provide daily and life-saving services to your constituents. We need help, we need SB 310. I encourage you to move this important legislation to the floor of the House forthwith, and deliver relief to University Heights, and cities like ours all across Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and thank you for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the residents of University Heights.