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September 1, 2020

The Honorable Chairman Frank Hoagland and Senate Agriculture &  
Natural Resources Committee Members

Ohio Senate  
Ohio Statehouse  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Hoagland:

My name is Dan Leffingwell and I serve as Superintendent of Noble Local School District. I am pleased to offer this written proponent perspective on SB333.

We thank Senator Tim Schaffer for his work to draft and introduce SB333 which will require the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to make payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) to local governments, school districts and local levy-funded organizations to make up for tax revenue lost as the State of Ohio purchases the AEP ReCreation land property.

While we recognize the positive economic impacts of the nature-based recreation that the ODNR natural areas provide, it is estimated that the purchase of ODNR land will steeply impact Noble County with a tax revenue loss of an estimated \$160,000 or more annually. SB333 would require that annually, the director of natural resources shall provide payment from the state park fund an amount equal to the taxes that would be charged and payable on land or interests in land if not exempted from taxation, to the county auditor for distribution among the taxing units where such land is located as if levied and collected as taxes.

As introduced, SB333 Sec. 1501.29. (2) indicated "the total area of the land is more than five thousand acres." As presented to Noble County on the attached proposed land sale map provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), you will note that one of the Noble County parcels (noted as D on the attached map of 4,425 acres) individually is not more than five thousand acres. We trust that our county area will be included under the ODNR total sales and thus be fully eligible for the PILT.

We support SB333 as a mechanism to replace the loss of tax revenue from the ODNR purchase of American Electric Power land in Noble County. This will prevent negative impacts to the Noble General Revenue Fund, to the Townships where ODNR's parcels are located, as well as our schools and the entities relying on levy income for their programs and services like the Noble County Health Department, Noble County Senior Services, and Ohio State University – Extension, which also serves as our local economic development organization.

There are also potential agricultural income impacts from these ODNR land purchases due to existing land leases with farmers for grazing, haymaking and harvesting of corn and other crops. Rural Ohio Appalachian counties like Noble and Morgan cannot afford to lose any further existing tax base income to our local governments. The Sale of AEP land to ODNR will impact us heavily without the PILT suggested in SB333.

Again, we thank Senator Tim Schaffer for introducing SB 333 and for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of rural Appalachian counties like Noble and Morgan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Leffingwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Leffingwell, Noble Local School District Superintendent