

June 23, 2021

To: Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee

From: Delaware County Commissioner Jeff Benton and Orange Township Trustee Ryan Rivers

Re: Support for House Bill 146 – permissive prevailing wage

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 146. I am Jeff Benton, a Delaware County Commissioner, and I speak on behalf of all 3 Delaware County Commissioners. Numerous other County Commissioners with whom I've spoken also support making prevailing wage optional.

And I am Ryan Rivers, Trustee for Orange Township in Delaware County and President of the Delaware County Township Association. I join the Commissioners in support of this bill that will enhance our local control.

Delaware County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. State-mandated regulations like prevailing wage stymie our ability to get needed improvements and additions to critical infrastructure in a timely and cost effective manner. Government struggles to respond quickly to issues already, but the increased and excessive paperwork as well as the cost, audits and potential fines associated with prevailing wage make it even more difficult to provide necessary improvements for our citizens like road and bridge expansion, fiber, water and sewer, and police, fire and EMT buildings.

While our citizens wait, traffic accidents increase, housing and job-creating business developments slow down and we lose precious emergency response time.

One recent example of how prevailing wage hurt our residents is the expansion of prevailing wage to Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs) from last year. Delaware County had been using the exemption to speed up road improvements for the public and private sectors, who have been working together in our county to build needed infrastructure. A \$3 million project already in the pipeline quickly shot up to \$3.5 million when that change was implemented. That slowed our project and hurt our taxpayers. We have over \$400 million of road projects planned over the next 10 years. Complying with prevailing wage will increase those costs approximately \$70 million.

We believe public/private partnerships are the way of the future. We're asking you to make it easier for us to work together. Our private-sector partners and our taxpayers should not be crippled by this unnecessary and overly burdensome state regulation. And passing this bill

won't eliminate prevailing wage – it simply gives us the option of choosing whether or not to use it.

House Bill 146 would increase local control, which is the cornerstone of Ohio's governance philosophy. The bill would improve our ability to respond more quickly to the infrastructure problems in our county. It will protect future funding for our safety services and economic expansion. Passing House Bill 146 will allow us to create a safer and more prosperous environment for Delaware County residents and all Ohioans.

We respectfully request your support for House Bill 146.

Thank you for your time and consideration.