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HB 377 – ARPA Funding Proponent Testimony May 11, 2022 House Finance Committee

Good morning Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Marisa Myers, and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association. On behalf of the Ohio Township Association (OTA), I appreciate the opportunity to testify as a proponent of House Bill 377, which distributes the second round of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to Ohio's non-entitlement units of local government.

As you may recall, ARPA split local governments into two groups: larger jurisdictions receiving funding directly from the federal government and "non-entitlement units of local government," or NEUs, that would receive their allocation via the state. The NEU category includes cities, villages, and townships generally under 50,000 in population; this is 1,305 of the 1,308 townships in Ohio.

Last year, the General Assembly enacted House Bill 168, which appropriated the first half of the ARPA dollars set aside for local governments. You may also remember that townships were in a bit of limbo with their inclusion in the NEU category due to federal definitions used in the ARPA legislation. The OTA thanks the General Assembly for addressing that ambiguity and is also happy to report that those federal definitions have been updated as well.

Since the passage of HB 168, a lot has happened. The federal government has significantly updated guidance for using ARPA dollars, specifically allowing smaller jurisdictions to use their funding with more flexibility. Townships are now able to use their funding for general government services. This includes projects like road maintenance, providing safety services, updating public facilities, and other core government services.

House Bill 377 simply appropriates the rest of the available funding to Ohio's NEUs in the same fashion as HB 168, which federal law dictates can be distributed 12 months after the initial distribution. While townships are still wading through the federal paperwork, they appreciate this funding opportunity. We respectfully request that the General Assembly appropriate this second round of ARPA funding so that townships can continue to plan the most effective use of these dollars.

The Ohio Township Association supports HB 377, and we thank Reps. Hall and Swearingen for introducing this legislation. The OTA encourages favorable passage from this committee so that local governments can receive the next allocation of ARPA funding on schedule. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the committee members may have.