

February 24, 2022

Dear Representative Roemer,

Thank you for the opportunity to write in opposition of HB 519.

I am in opposition of the second part of the bill which would eliminate the penalty for not filing a legally required tax return if the taxpayer does not have a tax balance. Municipalities must be able to enforce the accurate and fair administration of the municipal income tax because municipalities rely heavily on this revenue source; 73% funds our Police & Fire Department, 18% funds our Streets Department and the remaining 9% provides monies to our Recreation, Capital Improvement & Transportation Assistance funds.

If this penalty were to be eliminated, it will hinder the leverage that municipal Tax Administrators use in an effort to encourage timely filing. Some taxpayers will not file a return when mandated unless there is a monetary fee to enforce filing. Municipalities must be able to enforce mandatory filing for all taxpayers in order to be consistent, uniform, and fair to all taxpayers.

Taxpayers are currently able to ask a municipal tax administrator to waive these penalties and many municipalities will waive the late fee when asked if the taxpayer is not a habitual late filer. The Athens City Income Tax Department will work with habitual late filers also, for example, if a taxpayer is delinquent in filing three years' worth of returns, rather than assess a full penalty on all three years, often I will cut each year's penalty in half or waive one year's penalty, which demonstrates to the delinquent taxpayer(s) that we have compassion for them and their situation. Having this leverage should be a unique tool to all municipal Tax Administrators in an effort to display empathy to the delinquent taxpayers, consideration of their situations, all while keeping the overall wellbeing of our revenue source in mind too.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully,



Krystyl Welsch
Athens City Income Tax Administrator