

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

Opponent Testimony

SB 193

May 17, 2022

Chair McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities, thank you for the opportunity to write in opposition to SB 193. I am Mark Mills, Mayor of Coshocton. We are a small city with a population of more than 11,000 people, located in East Central Ohio where the Tuscarawas and Walhonding Rivers meet to form the Muskingum. Home of the historic canal era town Roscoe Village, Coshocton boasts a solid industrial base, unique retail shops, outstanding and extensive recreational opportunities and an abundant arts community.

Senate Bill 193 would negatively impact my city, and cities across the state. This legislation seeks to prohibit local governments from placing a tax lien and foreclosing on property for unpaid water service charges. Currently, if the charges are not paid, the city may collect the unpaid charges by suing the property owner or other responsible party or by certifying the unpaid amount to the county auditor. The county audit can then place the unpaid amount on the tax list and attempt to collect the amount due in the same manner as property taxes. From there, if the charges remain unpaid, the municipality can subsequently foreclose on the property. This bill removes this option. This is not an option we choose to use unless in extreme circumstances; however, we do feel that it is necessary to continue to have the authority to take these actions if circumstances would warrant them..

We strongly oppose this legislation. If passed, we would have no authority to collect delinquent accounts, causing devastating repercussions to the city's limited finances. We are not able to shut off the sewer systems to those who have unpaid funds, and the unintended consequence is that these uncollected funds will result in higher utility costs for the other citizens using the utilities. The only opportunity this legislation would leave for us to collect funds is if the property goes into foreclosure by other means. In summary, SB 193 would cripple our ability to properly do our job of providing utilities to our citizens, and members of our community could be negatively financially impacted.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I urge the committee to oppose Senate Bill 193.

Mayor Mark Mills
City of Coshocton