

Good Afternoon Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski, and respected members of the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee.

My name is Neil Tunison and for over 25 years I have had the privilege of serving as the County Engineer for Warren County. I am also serve on the Board of the Warren County Transportation Improvement District (“TID”). The first time I testified before the General Assembly was over 20 years ago – and I have since only testified once. But, today, I’m here because I am extremely concerned about how this bill will harm the citizens of my county – and really every county in Ohio.

I’m not a lawyer, but I’ve been forced to take strips of land to build bridges or roads in our county where we had to follow Ohio’s eminent domain laws. As part of that, I have to respond to safety issues. But, to do that, as someone accountable to the electorate and with a limited budget, I first have to think about how much it will cost to make a roadway change.

This bill will make those cost decisions *much more expensive and much more uncertain*. (And, it will open up to litigation decisions we made over 4 years ago.) When guaranteed attorney’s fees are part of a bill, and the deck is so stacked against the government, it naturally makes it a lot harder to negotiate. These changes will drag out costs in terms of time and money. And, our county taxpayers will be the ones that ultimately pay the price in terms of safety, finances, and inconvenience.

Simply put, the transportation improvements that my county residents require will be more expensive if this bill becomes law. I do not think this is fair – and I hope you will oppose these changes to our eminent domain laws in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.