

Ohio House of Representatives
Economic and Workforce Development Committee
October 14, 2023

Written Testimony of Rosemary Helderman

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the consideration of this written testimony.

My name is Rosemary Helderman, and I am a resident of Strongsville, Ohio. My home is situated on Boston Road and is the first home to the west of Interstate 71 on the Strongsville side of Boston Road. With the push from the City of Strongsville to build the interchange/slip ramp and Representative Tom Patten placing an unethical provision into House Bill 23 (section 5501.60) forcing a highway interchange between two communities with specific provisions, I knew the home my husband and I tirelessly worked so hard to make, would be destroyed. This comes at a time when we only have a few more work years left. To uproot our lives at this time and start over would be a hardship and force us into many more years of work. This is not only true for my family, but many of the neighbors in my Boston Road community that are also facing the same future.

Upon hearing the news, I immediately went to a Brunswick City Emergency Meeting in reference to the building of the interchange. During the Brunswick City Emergency meeting I heard Brunswick resident after resident express their concerns on bringing an interchange into a residential neighborhood, the hardships it would cause the taxpayers of the City of Brunswick, the dangers of moving a high-pressure jet fuel pipeline, crime, human trafficking, the numerous losses of homes, plummeting house values, and more. It was upsetting to hear that the City of Brunswick would be forced into this plan against their wishes and without conversations between the two communities. Since that first emergency meeting, the conversations in the City of Brunswick have continued from both the city officials and residents who will suffer devastating impacts if this interchange is built.

Following the emergency meeting in the City of Brunswick, I raced to a Strongsville City Council meeting to express my concerns about this interchange. I have been a Strongsville resident and lived in my home on Boston Road for the past 24 years. The City of Strongsville council expressed that they were pushing for the Boston Road interchange for the "good of their city and citizens with regards to safety issues" and

continued by stating that sometimes a few must be inconvenienced for the "greater good". I commute to work going through the traffic concerns that the City of Strongsville has identified and expressed my disbelief in how an interchange at Boston Road would alleviate their problem. They asked me to wait until their feasibility study was completed so that I could understand how the data supports the building of such a costly project to alleviate traffic and safety concerns in a specific area of Strongsville. Not to my surprise, the study **did not** say that it would resolve their traffic problem and help with the safety issues they are experiencing (safety benefits to be minimal), but instead the building of the interchange could potentially create traffic problems in the Boston Road area (increased traffic on Boston Road which is a 2-lane hilly, country road and possible slower travel times on Interstate 71).

I am writing this testimony in support of House Bill 276, as introduced by Representative Ray and Representative Miller. I feel in this case that a legislator inserted legislation into House Bill 23 (section 5501.60) which has overreached his authority and role. There is an appropriate way to plan and build highway interchanges and the appropriate process was not followed. With this type of legislation, what will the future hold for Ohio's cities and their residents? Protocols were established for a reason! The feasibility study that the City of Strongsville paid for with help from the State of Ohio shows exactly why legislation should not override the appropriate protocol. The feasibility study proves that an interchange at Boston Road will not have an impact on the traffic safety problem that the City of Strongsville proclaims and shows that it wouldn't be built to help the "greater good". ODOT states in their response to the feasibility study that "it may be more feasible and cost effective to improve existing intersections than build a new interchange." According to House Bill 23 (section 5501.60) the State of Ohio **MUST** build a costly interchange at Boston Road. It would not be prudent or in good representation of the citizens in Ohio to leave these provisions in House Bill 23. I ask that you approve House Bill 276 and remove that language from House Bill 23 (section 5501.60).

I ask that you take my testimony into consideration and support House Bill 276 to repeal the Ohio Revised code 5501.60. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my written testimony.