

House Finance Committee

Proponent Testimony, House Joint Resolution 8 (Oelslager, Troy)

Jason Warner, Director of Strategic Engagement, Greater Ohio Policy Center

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Proponent Testimony on House Joint Resolution 8 (HJR8), which would place before the voters of Ohio the reauthorization to borrow money for the Ohio Public Works Commission's State Capital Improvement Program.

My name is Jason Warner. I am the Director of Strategic Engagement at the Greater Ohio Policy Center. Greater Ohio is Ohio's leading advocate for urban revitalization and sustainable growth, advocating for policies that revitalize Ohio.

First established in 1987, the State Capital Improvement Program has been an invaluable resource to the state and its communities. At a time when it is hard to find anything that we can agree on, the State Capital Improvement Program has been an exception, demonstrated by the faith voters have placed in the program. When it was last up for reauthorization in 2014, 65% of those voting approved the reauthorization of bonds to support the program.

As an advocacy organization, we work closely with counties, cities, towns and villages across the state of Ohio. As champions of Ohio's legacy cities, we know they face unique opportunities and challenges due to their loss of population and industry. We also know they are eager to build on their pasts to "reinvent" themselves and chart new futures.

The State Capital Improvement Program provides opportunities to these communities to aid the work they are engaged in every day revitalizing their downtowns, residential neighborhoods, waterfronts, and business parks. For example, State Capital Improvement Program funds have helped the city of Hamilton return a huge papermill to productive use as an indoor sports facility. Spooky Nook and the surrounding streets and new sanitation systems serving the 1.2 million square foot facility is generating millions of dollars in new economic activity in the city's downtown.

Likewise, cities and towns are working to create local roadway and mobility infrastructure that boost safety and convenience, support healthy lifestyles, and create vibrant places where people want to live, shop, and work.

Cities like Mansfield in Richland County are utilizing funds from the Public Works Commission to return one-way streets to two-way traffic, reconfigure stormwater management systems to eliminate flooding, and develop and revitalize their downtown corridor in ways that will make the area a more welcoming and pedestrian-friendly epicenter of a vibrant, energized community.

We are grateful to Representative's Oelslager and Troy for their leadership in sponsoring HJR8 and for the committee for prioritizing this work during the very busy lame duck session. Passage of HJR8 is just the first step in seeking the support of the citizens of Ohio for this vitally important program, but your commitment to the passage of HJR8 is welcome and appreciated.

We strongly urge the passage of HJR8 so that it can be brought before the voters of Ohio during the May 6, 2025 election.

Chair Edwards and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to share our thoughts on HJR8.