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Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Humphrey and the rest of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for your time and your willingness to hear feedback on SB 91.

Today, as when I spoke before this committee on October 9th, I am concerned about language that I believe represents an overreach by the state in matters of municipal governance. This language was specifically added to pre-empt a municipal charter amendment in Cleveland, Issue 38, that would have created a participatory budgeting process each year. As of November 8th, this charter amendment failed to pass by 1,201 votes, but 33,156 Cleveland voters still supported the idea on its merits. We believe that Ohio residents deserve the flexibility in the future to explore other variations of this idea, which has been successfully implemented in over 1500 cities worldwide.

Participatory Budgeting is a tool to empower ordinary citizens and foster renewed civic engagement. The most controversial element of our charter amendment was a provision that would have allowed citizen votes on participatory budgeting projects to be binding and unable to be vetoed by our city council. In most other cities, municipal legislatures honor these votes without such language mandating it, and I personally think that the process would work best as an open and forthright collaboration between citizens and their city government. We currently have no intention of running another ballot initiative, but still believe that Participatory Budgeting should remain an option for Ohioans who are seeking more transparency, accountability, and collaboration from their municipal legislatures. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Evan O'Reilly
People's Budget Cleveland