



NOVEMBER 27, 2023
OHIO HOUSE PENSIONS COMMITTEE
OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 296
MAYOR DAVID SCHEFFLER, CITY OF LANCASTER

Chair Mathews, Vice Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and Members of the House Pensions Committee, my name is David Scheffler, and I am the Mayor of Lancaster. I am writing in opposition to House Bill 296, which would increase municipalities' police pension contribution from 19.5 to 24 percent. This rate increase places a burden on taxpayers to provide a benefit most do not enjoy and it will adversely impact our investments into our current public safety workforce.

I have been a strident supporter of Lancaster's safety forces during my six-year tenure as mayor. When I assumed office in December 2017, the Lancaster Police Department was down to less than 60 officers. Authorized full strength was 72 officers. Now, the LPD is within a few hires of being at the new full strength of 75 officers, the level deemed necessary for the safety of our residents. This turnaround was made possible by passing a 25.7 percent increase in the Lancaster city income tax rate (1.75 to 2.20 percent).

The overwhelming majority of this additional tax is paid by citizens subject to the Social Security system, under which their employers contribute 7.65 percent of wages toward their retirement, which entitles them to retire at age 66 or 67. Many police officers are now able to retire at around age 50 with significantly richer benefits, as a percentage of income, than the Social Security-covered majority of taxpayers footing the bill.

If HB 296 passes, the additional strain on city finances will ultimately result in reductions in police strength, cuts in other city services or higher city income tax rates levied on citizens with much leaner retirement benefits than those currently available to police officers. As such, I urge a no vote on HB 296 as proposed as it will place a significant financial burden on municipalities and their taxpayers.