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Written Proponent Testimony – HB 57
Ohio Poverty Law Center
House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Danielle DeLeon Spires, and I am a policy advocate at the Ohio Poverty Law Center. The Ohio Poverty Law Center advocates for evidence-based policies that protect and expand the rights of low-income Ohioans. We are a non-profit law firm working closely with Ohio's legal aid community, serving Ohioans who are living, working, and raising their families in poverty. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 57 to index the homestead exemption amounts to inflation.

House Bill 57 indexes, for all property tax homestead exemptions, the amount of the exemption so that the exemption, and resulting tax savings, increases in proportion to the increase in a broad price inflation index.

Despite a decrease in Ohio's poverty rate, the state's poverty rate is higher than the U.S. poverty rate of 12.3 percent. This includes 8.1% Ohio seniors (age 65 and older) who were in poverty in 2019. Nearly 13.1% of Ohioans are living in poverty—earning less than \$23,030 annually for a family of three—according to the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies' (OACAA) State of Poverty in Ohio report. These Ohioans face legal issues and other problems that are intensified by living in poverty, such as a lack of suitable housing; access to health care, food assistance, or disability assistance; domestic violence; education inequity; and employment and income instability. More than one out of every three Ohio households lack the liquid assets need to stay out of poverty for three months.

This change would increase the number of people who could benefit from the exemption right now in a time of record inflation, along with record increases in property values. While any expansion of this exemption is a benefit to an aging population, a step to expand the income eligibility requirement would take another necessary step in further support.

Expanding this opportunity will allow for more Ohioans to remain in their homes as they age and provide stability amidst rising economic costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 57.

Sincerely,

Danielle DeLeon Spires



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