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Written Proponent Testimony – HB 274
Ohio Poverty Law Center
House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, 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 274 to authorize an enhanced property tax homestead exemption for certain long-term homeowners.

House Bill 274 establishes a third enhanced homestead exemption of \$50,000 for long-term homeowners. To qualify, a person must satisfy the criteria for the general homestead exemption, including meeting the income limit, and also have continuously owned and occupied the homestead or manufactured home for 20 or more consecutive years. This enhanced exemption also extends to the homeowner's surviving spouse until the spouse remarries, provided the spouse meets the income limit for the general homestead exemption.

Ohio's poverty rate increased from 12.7% to 13.4%, according to the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies 2023 report. The state has experienced a higher poverty rate than the nation as a whole since 2015. This includes 8.5% seniors (age 65 and older) who were in poverty in 2021. Nearly 13.3% of Ohioans are living in poverty—earning less than \$23,030 annually for a family of three. These individuals 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 needed to stay out of poverty for three months.

This legislation would provide assistance to seniors at a time of record increases in property values. Creating 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 274.

Sincerely,

Danielle DeLeon Spires



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