



HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS– PROPONENT TESTIMONY, HB 344 – 01.09.24

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on HB 344. My name is Hannah Kubbins and I am the Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity – Ohio.

AFP, along with a series of partner organizations, is working to move our society more closely to one reflective of the Principles of Human Progress – the principles so eloquently captured in the Declaration of Independence – one of equal rights and mutual benefit, where everyone can live a life of meaning and succeed by benefiting others with limited government intervention.

AFP’s support for HB 344 should come as no surprise. Our organization has a lengthy track record of protecting the taxpayer from rate increases and for added transparency in government.

There should be no confusion when an individual is deciding how to vote on an issue that affects their pocketbook. Unfortunately, voters often view “renewal” and “replacement” as synonyms when they appear on a ballot. However, the two, in practice, are entirely different as replacements have the potential to increase the asked for amount that ultimately increases the taxpayer’s final bill.

As Representatives Mathews and Hall explained during their sponsor testimony, renewals are easier to understand because they simply extend the previous levy and provide the same bill to the homeowner and benefit to the school district. However, replacements reset the effective millage due to increasing property values and raise tax bills on homeowners while appearing to keep the same ask when on the ballot. Voters are understandably confused when their final bill ends up being higher in the case of a replacement levy.

HB 344 provides greater transparency to the taxpayer by leaving in place renewals as well as renewals with increases, which clearly point out on the ballot what had been paid and what would be paid in the future if the levy passes.

HB 344 also makes improvements to HB 126 from the 134th General Assembly. HB 126 was a great step forward regarding property tax reform. Unfortunately, bad actors have taken advantage of a loophole that completely subverts the intent of the law.

HB 344 addresses this problem by prohibiting an individual from acting as an agent for a governmental entity. [The sponsors submitted a supplemental article that details what has and could continue to happen should this loophole not be addressed.](#)

HB 344 increases government transparency and places power and control back in the hands of those who are most affected by property tax increases – the taxpayer. We thank the sponsors of the bill and the committee for holding proponent testimony on HB 344 and look forward to future discussions.