



**House Ways & Means Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 344
4/23/2024**

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 testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 344.

Formed in 1910, Ohio REALTORS® is the state's largest professional trade organization with nearly 36,000 members representing both residential and commercial practitioners.

HB 344 will help avoid confusion surrounding the property tax implications of replacement and renewal levies that appear on the ballot. Many Ohioans view these levies as synonymous, when in fact they function very differently. A renewal levy extends a levy and raises the same revenue. HB 920 reduction factors apply to renewal levies, which protects property owners from increasing property taxes as their property values grow. On the other hand, HB 920 reduction factors do not apply with replacement levies as the effective millage rate applies to the updated value of the property, often leading to higher property taxes.

Another important change in HB 344 is that it closes loopholes that have been exploited in legislation (HB 126) passed during the 134th Ohio General Assembly, which was designed to provide transparency and protect property owners from valuation complaints at the Board of Revision. In an effort to circumvent the provisions included in HB 126, public entities have started using treasurers or attorneys to file complaints as individual property owners. The local government is then able to file a counter complaint, making them a party to the case. It is important to note that a majority of Ohio's political subdivisions local governments do not engage in this practice; however, a few have in an effort to generate more property tax revenue. HB 344 will close this loophole, ensuring the protections HB 126 provided are implemented as intended by the Ohio General Assembly.

Ohio REALTORS® supports HB 344 as it will simplify the types of levies that appear before votes and close loopholes intended to protect property owners from predatory property valuation challenges by ensuring the intent of HB 126 is being implemented.

We would like to thank the sponsors for their work on this important legislation and we urge the committee's support.

Sincerely,

Scott Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Ohio REALTORS®

