



Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 33
Interested Party Testimony
(Written)
May 30, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, and Ranking Member Sykes, and members of Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony regarding House Bill 33 (H.B. 33), the state's operating budget. The Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA) is asking for an increase in funding for their Local Development District members to help meet the need of increased development projects across the Appalachian region.

By way of background, ORDA is an organization of Ohio's four Local Development Districts (LDDs) and other entities dedicated to economic parity for Ohio's rural communities. Ohio's LDDs serve the 32 counties in Ohio's Appalachian region, which stretches south along the Ohio River and as far north as Lake Erie. Ohio's LDDs work closely with the Governor's Office of Appalachia to administer state and Appalachian Regional Commission funds.

Ohio's four LDDs serve their local communities by prioritizing development projects and finding sources of funds for the projects. The four LDDs are listed below.

- Buckeye Hills Regional Council (Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties)
- Eastgate Regional Council of Government (Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning)
- Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties)
- Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission (Brown, Clermont, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto, and Vinton Counties)

Under Ohio's operating budget, Ohio's LDDs receive an earmark for administrative costs under the Appalachia Assistance GRF Budget Line Item 195455. Under the current version of the bill, the LDDs receive \$170,000 per LDD per fiscal year. ORDA is advocating for this earmark to be increased to \$210,000 per LDD per fiscal year. Recently, Ohio's LDDs received additional responsibilities in partnership with the Governor's Office of Appalachia. Under House Bill 377 from the 134th general assembly, the General Assembly created the Appalachia Community Grant Program, which the Department of Development along with consultation of LDDs will be administered. Due to these additional responsibilities, ORDA believes it is appropriate to request for additional funds.



ORDA also believes the Appalachia Assistance Line Item should receive an increase of \$4 million, therefore totaling \$10,513,998. Distinguishable from the administrative dollars requested, additional funding in this line item would support the Governor's Office of Appalachia, which has also taken on new responsibilities recently. This line item in particular supports the administrative costs of planning and liaison activities for the Governor's Office of Appalachia. The increase would also fund projects that are designated by the four LDDs as community investment and rapid response projects. These dollars would allow additional local communities to receive funding for imperative local projects such as critical infrastructure investments to ensure that the Appalachian region has access to safe drinking water, wastewater facilities, broadband, and access roads for new businesses. In 2022, for every \$1 invested by GOA, Ohio LDDs leveraged \$5.88 in additional investments leading to the creation of 325 jobs and the retention of 267 jobs.

We encourage this committee to support Ohio's four LDDs and the Governor's Office of Appalachia by increasing the administrative earmark for the LDDs and increasing the Appalachia Assistance line item. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony on House Bill 33. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via phone or e-mail.