

Dr. Terry Johnson

State Senator
14th District



Sponsor Testimony
Senate Bill 139
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
November 14th, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 139.

This legislation appropriates \$2.5 million to Goshen Township to support rebuilding its fire station, and is a companion bill to House Bill 244.

Goshen Township, located in Clermont County in my district, was hit by a tornado July 6th, 2022. The tornado was less than half a mile wide at its peak, but reached up to 130 miles per hour wind speeds. More than 150 buildings were either destroyed or damaged as the tornado took its course.

Goshen Township's fire station, Station 18, sustained serious damage, and a third of the firehouse had to be demolished. Due to this damage, the township has faced a choice: spend millions to repair an old, 41-year-old building, or rebuild the entire station. Goshen has opted to rebuild; unfortunately, most recent estimates place the price tag at \$7.5 million. While Goshen Township qualifies for some disaster relief assistance from the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, this caps at 75% of eligible costs after insurance. They have not been deemed eligible for FEMA aid, as they do not meet the required uninsured dollar amount.

After EMA assistance and insurance, Goshen is still short about \$2.6 million to repair Station 18. The township has a population of only 16,000, and their yearly budget is not equipped to handle an expense this large. While some communities might be able to successfully pass a levy to bridge the gap, the entirety of Clermont County is already suffering from a drastic

property tax increase handed down from the Department of Taxation. Clermont County is facing a 43% increase in property taxes. A levy would be an untenable financial burden for this community, and further grant applications have proven unsuccessful.

For the last year, Station 18 has been split in two: the west side of the Township is operating out of Station 19, and the east side is operating out of a single-wide mobile home, slowing response times and harming the fire department's efficiency. The trailer has to be parked next to a service garage so that they can keep one engine in service. Inflation has caused the cost of labor and materials to increase dramatically, making repairs less and less feasible for Goshen Township as time goes on.

This appropriation would cover the remaining balance to rebuild the fire station, and would alleviate the burden of this devastating natural disaster. It has been a year since this tornado upended the lives of thousands of my constituents. The Ohio General Assembly has an opportunity to help, and to make all the difference.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Funding breakdown from Goshen Township:

Construction of the building: ~14,000 Sq. Ft. (the same size as the destroyed building) @ \$420 per sq. ft. = \$5,880,000 (current pricing)

Ancillary costs:

Demolition of existing building - \$193,000
Architectural Fees - \$ 533,000
Legal - \$3,700
Environmental Study/Fees - \$10,230
Furniture - \$58,475.52
Washer/Dryers - \$2,400
Appliances - \$14,601
Phone System - \$28,000
Radio/Communications systems- \$35,000
IT - \$51,000
Gear Storage - \$14,019
Computers/Station alerting monitors- \$10,044
Maintenance/Cabinets - \$6,250
Security Cameras - \$7,885
Gear Extractor and Dryer - \$19,700
Breathing Air System - \$64,000
Vehicle Exhaust Removal System - \$88,000
Health and Wellness Systems - \$9,800
Misc. Items & contingencies - \$68,946.27

Total ancillary costs = \$1,218,050

Total costs:

Sub Total:

Building and ancillary costs - \$7,098,050
Labor & material inflation estimate +6% - \$425,883

Grand Total = \$7,523,933

Funding:

Insurance payout - \$1,969,413
Ohio EMA Disaster assistance (75% of the insurance gap) - \$2,932,940

Existing funding total = \$4,902,353

Summary:

Total costs - \$7,523,933

Existing funding - \$4,902,353

Difference - \$2,621,580

SB 139 would provide - \$2,500,000

Balance (using local funds) - \$121,580