

Ohio Senate General Government Committee

Opponent Testimony Senate Bill 158

Ryan Puente, Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Government Affairs Officer
City of Cleveland

September 26, 2023

Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee – on behalf of the City of Cleveland, thank you for this opportunity to submit written opponent testimony on Senate Bill 158.

The proposed legislation would prohibit a municipality from having a local charter amendment or ordinance that allows for a vote of its residents to determine the city's allocation of budgetary funds.

Although Senate Bill 158 would broadly apply to all municipal corporations, the bill's timing relates to a proposed Cleveland charter amendment, Issue 38, on the ballot this November. Essentially, the bill would nullify Issue 38, a citizen-led effort that would allocate two percent of the city's budget – about \$14 million – to projects voted on by residents. Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb is opposed to Issue 38 as it would curtail our control over the city's budget and could lead to significant cuts in critical services, including public safety.

However, we have serious concerns about proposed state preemption laws and have consistently opposed measures that encroach upon the authority of municipalities enshrined in the Ohio Constitution. While Senate Bill 158 on its surface is intended to be helpful, the legislation would perpetuate the continued flow of preemption laws in Ohio that erode local control and hamper the ability of cities and its citizens to implement policies reflective of the unique needs of their communities. If passed, the Legislature would be exceeding its authority by determining how a municipality should allocate its own resources.

As a result, we respectfully request the Ohio Senate General Government Committee oppose Senate Bill 158.

Thank you for your consideration.