

Senate Select Committee on Housing
December 4, 2023

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Johnson, and members of the Senate Select Committee on Housing, my name is Ed Good. I am a Township Trustee in Mead Township, Belmont County. I also serve as a Board Member on the Ohio Township Association (OTA) Board of Directors. Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this important topic for the state of Ohio.

I have been a township trustee for over 27 years, and over that time the landscape of Ohio has changed. The decisions of past legislatures, governors and citizens have shaped where we are today. Ohio is a booming state with economic investments, people moving back into the state, and college students staying after graduation. There is no doubt there is a need for housing in the state. And the recommendations this committee will make will help shape where Ohio is headed in the next 25 years.

I have watched previous hearings, listened to testimony and the points made by differing sides on zoning, development, and housing. The perspective I want to speak from today is the concerns from places without zoning like Mead Township, and many counties in Appalachia and rural portions of the state that could have zoning implemented if a statewide plan were adopted.

Many areas across our state currently thrive without zoning ordinances. Places like my township have controlled development, meaning a developer has few restrictions on projects they wish to pursue. We are fortunate to have developments such as the PTT cracker plant that saw investments of \$350 million over 8 years in my community. With new businesses, and no zoning townships in Belmont County, Jefferson County, Monroe County should be hotbeds for housing and development, as supply and demand principles would dictate.

The unique needs and challenges of Central Ohio might necessitate zoning regulations, but imposing these standards uniformly across the state disregards the diversity of our communities. What works for one region may not necessarily benefit another. Unfortunately, it seems that other counties might be asked to pay the price for the development challenges in Central Ohio. Implementing widespread zoning risks impeding the growth potential of regions that have thrived without rigid zoning plans. It's crucial to recognize and respect the distinct identities and needs of different parts of our state.

I want to share an experience within my township when it comes to zoning. About 15-20 years ago Mead Township attempted to implement a moderate zoning plan, junk cars, scrap tires, etc. The residents caused an uproar at the notion and vowed political action and electoral revenge. The issue was subsequently overwhelmingly defeated. I believe you will find similar stories from residents, or subdivisions from this region that hold the fundamental principle of local autonomy in high regard. In fact, they maintain a delicate balance between progress and preservation, allowing for organic growth while safeguarding the fabric that defines our state. This part of the state certainly has benefited from no zoning in terms of the development of the oil and gas industry, but has also felt the housing crunch as a result of the industry as well.

As an OTA Board Member, I want to share the efforts the State Association is attempting and has recommended for consideration.

State Aid for Communities to Update Comprehensive Land Use Plans and Zoning Regulations
Each General Assembly, the OTA introduces a township omnibus bill. House Bill 315, sponsored by Representatives Hall and Seitz, contains a request for \$1.5 million in each fiscal year that would be

used as grants to local governments to assist in updating their comprehensive land use plans and zoning resolutions. Comprehensive plans are an essential tool that helps townships pave the way for development in their communities and often, townships do not have the budget to update their plans, which can cost upwards of \$60,000.

Zoning Hearing Public Notice Requirement

Through our discussions with township land use and zoning attorneys, we were recommended to shorten the 10-day public notice requirement for zoning hearings to seven days.

Water and Sewer for All Ohioans

The Ohio Township Association recommends the state alter the way water and sewer services are provided to Ohio residents. In 2023, water and sewer are a necessity, not a luxury. Today, water and sewer are controlled by municipalities, who often use these services to hold developers hostage. We have heard many stories where a township approves residential developments, only for the city that would provide the water and sewer, to force annexation. The OTA has supported legislation such as House Bill 163 from the 133rd General Assembly to help alleviate the problem where municipalities charge double the water and sewer rates to township residents. Today, as it was then, municipalities charge upwards of 125% or more to township residents for water and sewer. The fact is whoever controls water and sewer controls development.

Conclusion

Just like when the state was in a bind financially, the state clawed its way out of a deficit, and has now reached the largest rainy day in history because of many factors, but a partnership with local governments being one of them. I ask that the state and locals continue to work together to solve the housing crisis, just like we did with the deficit, and continue to move Ohio forward. With no income tax, an abundance of land, and minimal regulations within this region of the state, townships should be attractive for developers. With the additional tools outlined in my testimony, I am confident we can adequately address the housing problem. Collaboration and tailored solutions, not forced mandates, will foster sustainable growth, and preserve our state.

Madam Chair, thank you for holding traveling hearings and getting different perspectives from around the state. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and would happily answer any questions you or the committee members may have.