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State Senator Catherine D. Ingram

9th Senate District | 135th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 85, Local Government – June 28 2023

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Demora, and members of the Senate Local Government Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 85. This bill is a reintroduction of H.B. 245 from the 134th General Assembly.

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the rising cost of necessities and commodities have left thousands of Ohioans struggling to pay their utility bills. Water & Sewer rates across Ohio have increased, leaving Ohio's most vulnerable population subject to reevaluating how they will be able to keep up with the cost.

Numerous municipalities have voted to increase their water and sewer rates across the state of Ohio. Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus have all increased their water and sewage rates between 3-5% in the last 3 years. Although a slight increase by \$2-4 each month may not seem significant to some, this increase could pose a detrimental effect to those who do not have financial security.

SB 85 aims to protect these Ohioans, especially folks over the age of 65, low and moderate-income persons, and those experiencing temporary hardship.

Currently the discounted rate or charges to water & sewer services may be provided to persons who are 65 years or older and who meet eligibility requirements established by the board. SB 85 would expand eligibility for county sewer discounted rates, charges, or rate reductions per the respective board of county commissioners permitted to establish under continuing law, for anyone who meets the following criteria:

- 65 years of age or older;
- Low- and moderate income persons;
- Experiencing temporary hardship.

This expansion would move to include individuals and families who qualify as low and moderate income persons as established by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency.

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Demora, and members of the Senate Local Government Committee, again I thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on SB 85.

I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.