

Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Local Government Committee, my name is Eric Wohlwend, and I have provided housing in Ohio for over 20 years. I appreciate your time in allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 93.

In just one of the single-family homes I rent out, I received a water bill for \$1,072.20. (Attached.) I never agreed to pay this bill. I did not use any of this water. A tenant signed for the water and agreed to pay the bill. I have Attached the bill that states "No Owner Signed." The tenant never paid. For about a year I did not even know this bill was continuously unpaid. When I found out, I asked the water company to turn off the water. The water company refused.

After the tenants moved out, the water company immediately turned off the water preventing my company from cleaning the house. We could not get water for a new tenant unless we paid our old tenant's past due water bill that the water company would not turn off or attempt to collect from the past tenant. Since this tenant already owed us almost \$5,000 we decided not to pay another \$1000 for their water. The house sat vacant for 8 months because of this.

This water charge was then attached to my tax bill. (Bill attached.) When I went in to pay my taxes, the treasurer would not accept payment for taxes until the water bill was paid. My lawyer advised me not to pay anything at that time. With hundreds of properties, this is the only tax bill that was not paid on time in 20 years.

As soon as I found out this water bill had been credited back I paid the taxes. Now there are still about \$300 in late fees on the taxes.

I do not know a single housing provider who would sign for a tenant's credit card charges, their car payment or their water bill if we were not forced to. I would use any other water service, but the cities have a monopoly. Many cities refuse to turn off the water while a tenant occupies the property. They then turn it off on the housing providers at the same time they are signing up the past due tenants for water at another property. These are the same tenants that leave owing the housing providers thousands of dollars.

The electric company, gas company and even the water company Aqua Ohio, collect from the tenants who use the utilities. It is only the municipal utilities, who ignore contracts and personal responsibility and attach liens to our properties after they refuse to stop service on past due accounts.

Passing HB 93 will add some accountability to both the water companies and the tenants. Just this one occurrence cost my company \$7,000 in lost rents and would have cost another thousand for tenant's water, if I would have not hired a lawyer who cost more than that. All of these charges must be paid by the many good tenants who pay their bills in higher rents. No one can provide services for less than their costs and stay in business for long.

I urge you to pass HB93 to help keep some tenants responsible for their own charges and to help us keep our rental charges down for all of the other good & responsible tenants.

Thank you for your time,
Eric M. Wohlwend
OPHP, NaPHP, RE Agent