

County of Summit Department of Sanitary Sewer Services
Michael Vinay, Director
Sub. H.B. 93 Opponent Testimony
Senate Local Government Committee
November 19, 2024

Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member DeMora, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of the County of Summit Department of Sanitary Sewer Services (DSSS). My name is Michael Vinay, and I serve as the Director of DSSS for Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro. DSSS is also a member of the Association of Ohio Metropolitan Wastewater Agencies (AOMWA). DSSS joins AOMWA in the opposition of Substitute House Bill 93.

DSSS is public sanitary sewer utility provider that serves over 51,000 customers across 13 communities and portions of 3 counties. The department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of approximately 1,000 miles of sanitary sewer lines, over 50,000 manholes, and 200 pump stations. Additionally, the department operates 5 Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitted wastewater treatment plants. On average, DSSS treats 2.65 billion gallons annually.

While DSSS echoes the concerns raised by other opponents, the department wants to bring an additional concern to members of the committee.

DSSS is still trying to ascertain the purpose of the legislation (outside of transferring the responsibility of transient property management from the property owner to the local public utility provider), let alone the long-term effects such legislation will have regarding customer rate pressure. However, a concerning issue that needs to be pointed out is the effect this legislation will have on not only singular community customer bases, but the effect across diverse communities in which public water and sewer utility providers combine resources to provide safe drinking water and reclaim wastewater more efficiently and effectively. For years, federal, state, and local legislators and regulators have encouraged public utility regionalization as a means of cost savings and providing more efficient service delivery, while also minimizing point source discharges in rivers, streams and creeks. For example, DSSS has numerous intergovernmental agreements with various communities and counties to transport and/or treat sanitary sewage. Each of these agreements are unique and complex in nature and typically involve either a bulk community rate or provider-cost negotiated rate. Under this bill, where these agreements exist would result in a cost (consumer rate) driver derived from either the overly logistical/investigative cost collection process provided in the bill, or the lack of collection in unpaid charges in general. Essentially, the result would be that compliant consumer classes across various communities would subsidize the increased collection costs and/or unpaid charges for which they are not responsible. Additionally, any negative revenue driver results in less funds directed toward the much necessary infrastructure improvements that all public utility providers must undertake.

DSSS joins AOMWA and its member agencies in strongly opposing Sub. HB 93's proposals to restrict municipalities from recovering unpaid invoices. We believe that more

discussion and outreach should occur that all potential outcomes from such legislation are thoroughly vetted. We support the testimony of the Association of Ohio Drinking Water Agencies and the City of Canton. Chairwoman O'Brien and Members of the Committee, your attention and consideration in this matter are very much appreciated.