

**Association of Ohio Metropolitan Wastewater Agencies**  
**Diana Christy, President**  
**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 Association of Ohio Metropolitan Wastewater Agencies ("AOMWA"). My name is Diana Christy, and I serve as the President of AOMWA. AOMWA opposes Substitute House Bill 93.

AOMWA is a not-for-profit trade association that represents the interests of public wastewater agencies across the state of Ohio, and AOMWA's members include the cities of Akron, Avon Lake, Bowling Green, Canton, Columbus, Dayton, Euclid, Fairfield, Hamilton, Lancaster, Lima, Marysville, Middletown, Newark, Portsmouth, Solon, Springfield, Wadsworth, and Warren. AOMWA serves more than 4 million Ohioans and successfully treats more than 320 billion gallons of wastewater each year.

Although AOMWA echoes the concerns raised by other opponents, we write to address three concerns with the current version of the bill.

First, AOMWA understands that the purpose of this legislation is to address perceived unfairness in connection with tenants who leave landlords responsible for unpaid utility services. This current arrangement may cut into the profits of landlords on occasion. However, the bill would merely shift responsibility for unpaid bills to local utilities, which are in a much worse position than landlords to track the location of renters from thousands of units each month. This would force increases in the costs of service that would be passed on to ratepayers. In this way, the proposed legislation would create a more inequitable result.

Second, utilities would be forced to incur additional costs beyond those associated with the risk of nonpayment by tenants. The legislation would also lead to significant local government red tape by requiring additional litigation and investigation of complaints within local governments. The legislation would require that municipalities investigate every complaint received. It would also require that all complaints are resolved in 10 days, or the municipality would be required to provide updates once every five business days. This would be required regardless of the legitimacy of the complaint, resulting in mandatory busy work that would further drive increases in costs for all ratepayers. Utilities already have their own administrative billing appeals process, so this would duplicate existing administrative procedures. The bill as drafted would simply increase red tape and force the general public to incur costs for the benefit of landlords.

Third, the bill requires that "a municipal court or county court" shall hear appeals regarding billing complaints. Beyond the additional litigation expense that the utilities would face, it is unclear whether any analysis has been done to evaluate the stress that these matters would

place on the courts. The bill also effectively requires that the Supreme Court adopt rules to provide the standards by which these claims are adjudicated. It is unclear whether either the local courts or Supreme Court have been consulted. It appears the bill would impose a significant strain on these bodies of government as well, and the proponent testimony has offered no compelling reason why the existing process is in need of any change.

As a result, AOMWA and its member agencies strongly oppose Sub. HB 93's proposals to restrict municipalities from recovering unpaid invoices. At a minimum, we request that the committee allow for further stakeholder discussion and engagement before acting on this 28-page bill. 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.