



**OHIO SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Dec. 3, 2024**

**Written Interested Party Testimony**  
**House Bill 315**

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Ohio Senate Local Government Committee:

My name is Kent Scarrett, and I serve as Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony regarding House Bill 315, legislation that would make a variety of changes related to the administration of township government in Ohio.

As the statewide association that represents more than 730 of Ohio's cities and villages, the Ohio Municipal League's interest in this bill mainly relates to the provisions that overlap with the interests of our municipal members.

Specific to the provisions in House Bill 315, there are two areas of benefit to municipalities -- which the league is supportive of but feels more should be done -- that we would like to highlight:

**Modernization of Zoning Regulations**

The bill appropriates \$1.5 million for each fiscal year for the Ohio Department of Development to offer grants to help modernize zoning regulations and processes. The House State and Local Government Committee accepted an amendment to expand these grants beyond townships to any Ohio political subdivision. The league appreciates the expansion of this grant opportunity which will now allow cities and villages to participate.

As this committee is aware, the financial investment required to perform a comprehensive review and update of local land use laws is considerable, and many of Ohio's municipalities do not have the financial ability to complete these important updates. In addition to these financial constraints, municipalities often are without the technical bandwidth or internal expertise to complete the tasks required to modernize zoning laws, so this partnership opportunity with the state is critical and very timely.

In recognition of the amount of assistance that is required for municipalities and Ohio's other political subdivisions to modernize zoning codes, we hope that you will consider that the current proposal for \$3 million over the biennium appropriation is considerably less than what would be needed for the funding to make the intended impact that the proposal deserves. The league is asking that the members of this committee consider increasing the appropriation amount to \$10 million over the biennium for these modernized zoning grants,

which would allow the program to be more impactful on a statewide basis – even though still not meeting the full need throughout the state.

### **Indigent Burial and Cremation Support Program**

The bill appropriates \$1 million for each fiscal year to the Indigent Burial and Cremation Support Program. Providing burials and cremations for indigent deceased persons is the responsibility of local governments, including municipalities. OML supports this appropriation, as the program allows local governments to apply for reimbursement of costs charged or contracted by a funeral home, but it should be better funded.

The current lack of funding in the state operating budget has prevented the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors from reimbursing these costs, therefore leading to the suspension of the program on July 1, 2023. The appropriation for the program is welcome, but we are concerned that the need outpaces the obligation. Consequently, we respectfully recommend a combined appropriation over the biennium of \$5 million.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Ohio Municipal League's position on sections of House Bill 315, and we appreciate the hard work of this committee.