

Ohio Senate  
Transportation Committee  
April 15, 2024  
Testimony of Nicholas J. Hanek

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to express support for the passage of Senate Bill 155 as introduced by Senator Mark Romanchuk. My name is Nicholas Hanek and I am the Council President and the Vice-Mayor of the City of Brunswick, the largest city in Medina County. We are thankful for the tireless advocacy of Senator Romanchuk on behalf of the citizens of Brunswick.

Senate Bill 155 accomplishes one thing: it repeals a section of the Ohio Revised Code that mandates the construction of a highway interchange into a specific residential corridor at the border of Cuyahoga and Medina Counties. Over the last year, since a new ORC section (ORC 5501.60) was inserted into the transportation budget (HB 23), the City of Brunswick has dealt with the sudden and immediate impact of what happens when a law mandates the destruction of a large portion of a residential community. It has caused substantial anxiety for many, many residents as they worry about the short- and long-term implications of what happens when the government takes your property or your quiet street is now nothing more than a transient rest stop. As a local government, we must prepare for the potential issues related to the jet fuel pipeline that runs next to the site of the proposed interchange and the crippling financial impacts it will have on the City of Brunswick's municipal budget. I have had countless residents discuss with me whether they should invest money into a home repair project – or whether their children will be forced to move school districts. The answers to these questions are hard when some elected officials have expressed great joy at the prospect of taking these homes for big government. Moving this bill forward will help our residents – paralyzed by an ever-present threat- to regain normalcy in their lives.

The passage of SB 155 does not only help the residents facing the radical changes to their day to day lives and threat to their homes, it also helps to repeal a law that is already outdated and with broad

ranging detrimental impacts that continue to grow in concern. Following the passage of HB 23 last year, a comprehensive and substantial study was completed that shows that placing the proposed new highway interchange into this residential neighborhood would have definitive detrimental impacts on multiple communities including hurting traffic on I-71 and increasing traffic congestion in the region. This project would hurt all businesses that use I-71 through delayed travel times and create a new traffic issue on the highway. The study that drew these definitive conclusions was conducted by the City of Strongsville using a Strongsville company. Additionally, both the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency have both expressed in communication or via vote that this proposed interchange is without justification. In addition – the City of Strongsville has recently proudly and boldly announced it would be substantially increasing the number of buildings and businesses at the site of the purported traffic issue within the City of Strongsville through adding to an existing shopping mall without any changes to current traffic patterns. The traffic concerns of the City of Strongsville appear to be gone due to these very clear actions that have been taken since the passage of HB 23. It is a definitive statement to say at this point that the highway interchange has nothing to do with any traffic or safety concerns through both substantial data analysis and the practical result of the newly proposed development.

The negative impacts on the residents of the community shows that this is a law that needs repealed, the studied data shows that the proposed interchange is a detriment to all of Ohio's use of I-71, and the actions of the City of Strongsville show that it is no longer a real concern for the proponents of this law. But there are far more known impacts of keeping ORC 5501.60 as the law of Ohio. This is a law that attacks suburban and exurban counties for the benefit of metropolitan areas. While today it is an attempt of a Cuyahoga County community to impose on a Medina County community, it will certainly be Franklin County on Licking County or Hamilton County on Butler County or so on next. The blueprint is there and it only takes a slight adjustment – or some population growth related to a new Intel plant or other project – for another community to be next. To what extent this law impacts investment in Ohio is

unknown at this point – but it stands to reason that businesses and residents located in counties outside of metropolitan areas can and should fear the kind of government that permits (and openly and publicly discusses) the sudden taking of your property without any basis to do so whatsoever. ORC 5501.60 is a law that hurts Ohio.

The intention of the law is to subvert all known processes related to how highways develop both in Ohio and throughout this country. The process of the development of highways is typically left to data-driven decision making with the consultation of transportation professionals. It is time for Ohio to return to what works – data – and to leave behind what doesn't – big government. On behalf of the City of Brunswick, I am requesting that you support Senate Bill 155 and the repeal of ORC 5501.60.