

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ben Kaster. I am a business management student at Marion Technical College, and an upcoming political science and pre-law student at Ohio Wesleyan University. I do not represent the universities I attend, but instead I represent myself as a private citizen. I am here to testify in strong favor of house bill 54.

The traffic control devices that are mentioned in this bill will be a significant improvement to promoting the use and safety of active transportation. Bike lanes and crosswalks have always been present in Ohio's larger cities, like Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. However, their safe and unobstructed usage has remained questionable. Everytime I drive through Columbus I see people driving or parking their vehicles in bike lanes. This further dissuades people from utilizing active transportation, as they feel it wouldn't be as efficient as hopping in their car and driving to their destination. However, this bill significantly helps to crack down on motorists obstructing these bike lanes, and helps bring back the motivation to utilize active transport. The fact that the bill repeatedly prohibits the clause of parking in a bike lane will help open up traffic to bikers. On top of that, extending the punishment to a misdemeanor or further penalty upon multiple offenses will crack down on negligent drivers obstructing these lanes.

Regarding the general management and authority, I find the clarifying clauses to work in the Ohio Department of Transportation's benefit. The current law over a six-month improvement plan is sincerely muddled, without a clause toward conduct. This bill will help clarify that if an ODOT employee is found to be behaving erratically or dangerously, then the director will be allowed to take immediate action without the six-month plan.

Regarding the highway use and obstruction section, furthering an ODOT director to prohibit a permitted individual from using a portion of a highway gives much more clarity to highway and traffic safety. Requiring power or telephone companies to comply with structure abandonment procedures is also extremely beneficial, as it reduces risk of mismanagement or hazard, and quite frankly removes an eyesore off the side of the road. Forcing notification submission to ODOT will help make abandonments more clear and direct, with more information collection over location, transportation content, and intent to remove. Allowing ODOT to also determine whether the cost of removal will be exceeding the public benefit is a fantastic clause over public spending knowledge and regulation.

Adding a clause to the revised code over highway obstruction removal shows clarity over damages. This clause is beneficial in the fact that ODOT would not be liable for damages while removing or relocation obstruction

negligently left behind. Adding the daily fine is also a well-written deterrent to prevent obstruction or careless planning by individuals, firms, or corporations occupying highways with intent to utilize an object or structure. Furthermore, requiring commitments and deadlines from those involved with work deemed necessary by ODOT will help speed along road management and maintenance, and greatly assist with improving our Ohio roads and highways in a timely manner. Permanently authorizing the ODOT director to enter into IDIQ contracts for highway maintenance is another great way to improve Ohio roads and highways. Not only will it help improve, it will clarify the parameters that the contract must fall under. By clarifying the funding, duration, and geographical area will give ODOT an accurate and secure database of the road work that is being contracted. Furthermore, allowing ODOT to chip or fog seal without using competitive bidding will further speed up the process of improving Ohio roads. Competitive bidding takes up a lot of time, and removing the necessity of bidding will help fill damaging holes or dips in roads or highways that could hurt Ohio drivers or their vehicles.

With that, I implore you to strongly consider my testimony and vote YES on this extremely beneficial bill that helps clarify ODOT procedures, increases the safety and utilization of active transportation, and increases road maintenance productivity. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, I

will now take any questions you may have. If there are none, I yield my time back to the chair.