



Anderson Township

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ANDERSON TOWNSHIP (HAMILTON COUNTY), OHIO

TRUSTEE CHAIR LEXI LAUSTEN

OPPONENT TESTIMONY

HOUSE BILL 96

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MARCH 12, 2025

CHAIRMAN STEWART, VICE CHAIR DOVILLA, RANKING MEMBER SWEENEY,
AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

My name is Lexi Lausten, and I serve as Chair of the Anderson Township Board of Township Trustees. It is my honor to appear before you today on behalf of the Board of Trustees to offer testimony on House Bill 96, the Governor's proposed state operating budget for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027. My testimony focuses on the repeal of excise tax revenue from local governments that host adult use marijuana dispensaries.

Anderson Township is an urban community of over 44,000 residents located in Hamilton County in southwest Ohio. The Township is bounded by the Ohio River to its south and the City of Cincinnati to the west with several villages and townships comprising the remaining borders. We are a full-service Township maintaining 122 miles of roadway and responding to 15,678 calls for fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement services during 2024. Yet, we remain true to the township form of government with 84.40% of our revenue derived from property taxes and tax increment financing.

In 2023, we saw an opportunity to lessen the property tax burden for our residents and businesses with the passage of State Issue 2 which stipulated that a portion of the taxes collected on the sales of adult use cannabis be distributed to host communities. Anderson voters in each of its thirty-two precincts overwhelmingly supported the commercialization, regulation, legalization, and taxing of adult use cannabis. In keeping with the will of our constituents, the Board of Trustees permitted dispensaries to locate within

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our community with the expectation that we would receive approximately \$1.5 million in host community fees annually. That revenue would be used to support our diminished General Fund which has experienced significant reductions since 2011 and allow us to stretch existing property tax levies thereby reducing the burden on our taxpayers.

For example, prior to its elimination in 2013, Anderson Township received an average of \$1.7 million annually from the Estate Tax. This combined with the redirection of Commercial Activity Tax revenue to the state's general revenue fund, the elimination of the Public Utility Tax, and changes in the Local Government Fund formula resulted in Anderson Township losing almost \$7 million in General Fund revenue in six years.

Some relief was anticipated with the advent of Video Lottery Terminals at Ohio's seven horse racing facilities and the promise of an annual host community fee of \$500,000 from the Casino Operators Settlement Fund. However, after receiving four initial payments totaling \$2 million, that revenue stream was eliminated through legislation during the 129th General Assembly. It is our hope that the host community fee associated with adult-use cannabis will not face the same fate.

Those who voted in favor of Issue 2 and local government officials who chose to allow dispensaries in their communities did so with the understanding that they would receive a portion of the tax dollars that will be garnered through the sale of marijuana. We respectfully ask you to ensure that funding for host communities is included in HB 96.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address this honorable committee.



Lexi Lausten, Chair

Anderson Township Board of Township Trustees