



## OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

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### House Bill 96 Operating Budget

#### House Finance Committee

April 7, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Kyle Brooks, and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association. On behalf of Ohio's 1,308 townships, thank you for the opportunity to testify on substitute HB 96, the operating budget.

The OTA appreciates the effort to preserve the state's financial commitments to local governments. Our members value this financial support, however there are several areas on which we would like to comment.

First, I would like to express our support for the following items in the substitute bill:

- Increased Burial Permit fees with a portion of the fee allocated to the Cemetery Grant Program (COMCD25)
- Local Option Election to pay for ballot cost (LOCCD6)
- Next Generation 9-1-1 access (DASCD29)

#### OTA Requested Amendments

As you know, townships are creatures of statute and require the expressed or implied authority in law to provide services, develop regulations, and run their local jurisdictions. As such, the OTA is pursuing additional amendments to HB 96. We would ask for your favorable consideration of their inclusion in the bill.

##### *Local Government Fund*

HB 96 includes a provision to increase the Local Government Fund (LGF) from 1.7% to 1.75%. While we appreciate the proposed increase, the LGF remains one of the primary sources of funding for townships, supporting the essential services communities rely on every day. Therefore, the OTA **respectfully requests an increase in the LGF from 1.7% to 2.5%**

##### *Repeal of County Recorder Cemetery Deed Language*

Last General Assembly, R.C. §517.07 was amended to permit a township fiscal officer to record a sale of a cemetery deed with the county recorder. A township fiscal officer is required to have a book of deeds for each deed. After discussions with the County Recorders Association and other interested parties, we do not feel this change was necessary.

**The OTA supports amendment HC\_136\_2481, which strikes the following language from the code:**

*“or with the county recorder under section 317.08 of the Revised Code.”*

And eliminates the reference to R.C. §517.07 in R.C. §317.08 (A)(29).

#### **Marijuana**

I would be remiss if I did not highlight a few items that the OTA opposes. We appreciate the House's inclusion of the host community fund, as the Governor's proposal made significant changes to the adult-use marijuana law, eliminating the fund. HB 96 provides 20% of the excise tax to

political subdivisions that have accepted adult-use cannabis facilities. However, under current law, 36% of the 10% excise tax is distributed to townships and municipalities that have adult use dispensaries.

Equally as concerning is a provision that sunsets the host community fund after five years. After five years, the money will be diverted to the GRF, while the dispensary will remain in the township.

The OTA also seeks clarification regarding the language in §3780.25 of the bill. While section (A) allows a township to limit the number of adult-use facilities, section (B) eliminates a township's ability to prohibit or limit the operations of an adult-use cultivator, processor, or dispensary. The OTA requests clarification on the meaning and intended scope of the phrase "prohibits or limits the operations of." Specifically, we seek to understand whether the legislative intent was to restrict local authority such as regulating the hours of operations and give oversight to the state.

### **Public Improvement Contracts**

The OTA opposes the proposed change requiring contractors to be paid within 30 days of "substantial" completion of work. Since these payments involve taxpayer dollars, they must be managed with careful oversight and fiscal responsibility. Instead, the OTA supports **amendment HC\_136\_2348**, which restores previous law—ensuring contractors are paid upon the full completion of their work.

The OTA and the 1,308 townships in the state thank the House for the continued investment in Ohio's townships.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you and the House Finance Committee, and I would be happy to answer any questions you or the committee members may have.