



HB 76– Allow Increase in Membership of Boards of Township Trustees
Sponsor Testimony
Representative Brian Lorenz & Representative Rachel Baker

Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and esteemed members of the Ohio House local Government Committee, thank you for allowing us to speak on this bill.

Currently, under Chapter 505 of the Ohio Revised Code, Townships are required to have a board of three Trustees. Yet, the population of Townships across Ohio widely differs. According to the recent 2020 census, the smallest township population size was 97 people, and the largest was more than 64,000. There are quite a few townships in Ohio with a population of less than 500, however townships with a population of 20,000 or more are represented by the same number of trustees.

Individuals residing in a township with a population of 500 are substantially better represented proportionally than an individual from an area like Orange Township, which has a population of more than 37,000 people. A board of Township Trustees that is responsible for a population of 500, proportionally represents around 167 people each. Comparatively, a board of Township Trustees that is responsible for a population of 30,000 people, proportionally represents around 10,000 people. There is a clear discrepancy in the ORC regarding Township representation.

Cities on the other hand have a tiered structure for how many council members they have. Here are those guidelines:

For a city with a population less than 10,000, the city has five council members.

For a city with a population between 10,000 and 25,000, the city has seven council members.

For a city with a population between 25,000 and 50,000, the city has nine council members.

For every additional 25,000 residents in addition to 50,000, the number of council members raises by one, until a maximum of 15 council members is reached.

Townships provide a wide range of services, such as: road maintenance, police, fire protection services, cemeteries, EMS, zoning, park services, etc. yet no matter the size of the Township, the residents are represented by three individuals.

This is why I, alongside my joint sponsor, have introduced this legislation. House Bill 76 would allow the electors of a township with more than 20,000 residents to petition for an expansion of their respective board, by two members. The petition would require signatures from at least 10% of the total votes that were cast in the previous gubernatorial election. Then if the signatures reached the 10% threshold, that petition would be voted on by the electors at the next even numbered general election. If the petition is voted for by the majority of the electors, then at the

next general election where one Trustee would usually be voted for, there would be an additional two Township Trustees on the ballot.

The same process can be done in reverse, for residents of a township who would like to go from five Trustees back to three. Additionally, if at the next census date, the Township population fell below 20,000, the board reverts back down to three Trustees.

Thank you again, and I will pass it over to my joint-sponsor.

Thank you, Rep Lorenz. Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the Ohio House Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on this bill.

I am pleased to support Rep Lorenz on this bill - and appreciate his work to introduce this legislation to allow this committee to consider the number of trustees serving townships across Ohio. This bill is a great example of the value of permissive legislation that provides local communities options to best govern themselves. It does not mandate an increase to more trustees - but rather is permissive in nature providing options for trustees to have more support and voters to advocate for more representation if that is something the local community assesses is needed. If trustees and community members in a large township are satisfied with being served by three trustees, this bill changes nothing. If trustees or voters in a large township feel that more representation is needed, they can advocate for this issue to be added to a local ballot and the voters are able to weigh the pros and cons of an increase in trustees for their specific community.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide testimony today and we would welcome any questions you may have.