



## **OHIO ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS**

**Ohio House of Representatives – Local Government Committee**

**Proponent Testimony on HB 139**

**Jon Harvey, President Ohio Professional Association of Fire Fighters**

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Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and esteemed members of the Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 139. My name is Jon Harvey - President of IAFF Local Union 336, Captain at Middletown's Fire Department and I serve as the President for the Ohio Professional Association of Fire Fighters - representing over 13,500 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel across Ohio. On behalf of our members and the communities they protect, we are pleased to support HB 139 and commend Representative Hall for introducing this legislation.

HB 139 establishes clear, minimum standards for the inspection, testing, and maintenance of fire hydrant systems across the state, ensuring they are functional when emergencies occur. These standards—based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines—are vital for firefighter safety and public protection. It is critical that when a fire occurs, the hydrants meant to serve as a lifeline for fire suppression efforts are not only present but working as expected.

We strongly support the intent and framework of this bill. However, we respectfully offer one suggestion to improve the legislation: the responsibility for enforcement and oversight should fall to the local authority having jurisdiction —typically the municipal or township fire chief or fire code official—rather than the State Fire Marshal.

Fire hydrant systems are inherently local infrastructure. The individuals who understand their conditions, placement, and performance best are the local fire departments and water authorities. Empowering the local authority having jurisdiction ensures that maintenance and compliance are handled promptly, efficiently, and with full knowledge of local systems and needs. The State Fire Marshal plays an important role in training, code development, and statewide coordination, but hydrant oversight is most effective and appropriate at the local level. This adjustment aligns with how other critical infrastructure is managed and avoids unnecessary state-level bureaucracy or delays.

Aside from this structural clarification, HB 139 takes an important step forward by requiring:

- Annual inspections and flow tests for all fire hydrants;
- Annual inspections and five-year flow tests for fire service main piping;
- Maintenance of fire service main piping strainers after each use;
- Retention of maintenance records for at least one year beyond the next servicing for transparency and accountability.

These standards will significantly enhance operational readiness and reduce liability exposure for municipalities and townships, while giving firefighters and residents confidence that hydrants will function when lives and property are on the line.

In conclusion, HB 139 reflects sound policy that prioritizes safety, preparedness, and professional standards. We support its passage and respectfully recommend amending the enforcement mechanism to place oversight with the local authority having jurisdiction.