

Proponent Testimony for HB113 On Annexation; Local Government Committee  
Jessica Franz  
Republican State Central Committee Senate District 5

Chairwoman King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the Local Government Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB113. I'm Jessica Franz, Republican State Central Committeewoman for Senate District 5 and a 14-year Bethel Township resident. Our community is at a breaking point, and HB113 offers the first real hope for relief and fairness in years.

Bethel Township is bearing the escalating consequences of annexations, with Huber Heights benefiting from new tax revenue while Bethel School District is left to manage explosive student growth. This unfair burden on township residents has created an unsustainable crisis that demands immediate action.

Since 2017, Bethel Schools has opened two new buildings, yet overcrowding persists. The latest annexation is projected to add over 1,500 students, with 100 to 120 new enrollees, or five classrooms, each year, effectively doubling the district's size within a decade.

In the meantime, we rely on trailers and repurposed spaces not meant for classrooms — an expensive, temporary fix that crams students into overcrowded conditions and undermines learning. Teachers struggle to teach effectively, especially with the growing number of non-English-speaking students, including unexpected refugees from Ukraine, often relying on tools like Google Translate to meet basic needs. These students face additional social and cultural challenges, yet the state offers no extra support or funding to help.

Municipalities annex land easily and collect the new income tax revenue, but the crushing burden of growth — the buildings, the staff, the services — lands squarely on the school districts. Meanwhile, the surge in additional vehicles strains local roads and traffic systems, driving up infrastructure costs that the township must cover without receiving any additional funding.

House Bill 113 improves the annexation process by requiring municipalities to provide equal services to annexed areas and ensuring the benefits of annexation outweigh the detriments to both the annexed area and the surrounding community. It directs the State Board of Education to transfer annexed territory into the school district of the municipality that annexed it, extends financial disclosure and ethics requirements to more individuals involved in annexations, and gives County Commissioners final authority over annexation petitions, limiting appeals to petitioners only.

While I am very pleased with the reforms in House Bill 113, I would have liked to see even greater authority granted to Township Trustees, who are closest to these issues and best positioned to understand and manage the local impacts of rapid growth. Additionally, I would

have liked the bill to include retroactive measures to address past annexations — specifically, to require the projected 1,500 students Bethel Schools will absorb as a result of the most recent annexation to instead attend Huber Heights City Schools following the bill's passage.

House Bill 113 is a critical step toward helping protect our students, our taxpayers, and our communities from being overwhelmed without the necessary infrastructure to support them.

I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 113.

Thank you Chairwoman King and committee members for hearing my testimony today and thank you for the work you do for our state. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have for me.