

April 30, 2025

Good morning, Representatives,

I would first like to say that it is an honor to speak before you and to participate in the process of creating legislation at the state level.

I would like to introduce the entire Batavia Township Board of Trustees: Randy Perry, Jim Sauls, and I am Rex Parsons. We have all come here from Clermont County this morning to express our deep concerns for our community and support annexation changes in House Bill 113.

Batavia Township is a thriving and growing community with a population of over 27,000. In the middle of our township is the Village of Batavia, which has a population of 2,000.

We understand the laws of the State of Ohio favor municipal governments when it comes to annexations and that annexations will continue to happen. However we feel, and have witnessed 1st hand, that loopholes in the current legislation permit abuse and don't protect all members of the Community.

Please let me explain, since 2011, the Village has annexed over 725 acres from the Township. This included land grabs to obtain the County Sheriff and Jail, Local Schools, UC Clermont College and other County Offices in Clermont County.

The Village of Batavia used the legislation to get government-owned land that had no rights in the annexation process. Most of these annexations were obtained with one property owner, and then, excessive annexation of right-of-way parcels was used to reach the government-owned land. The Village claimed it needed the additional income tax revenue to survive as a Village. This action dramatically increased their income tax revenue by getting well over 1,000 employees to pay one percent into the village. Basically, this was at little cost to the village as the County Sheriff provides police coverage to all the county offices and the Village relies heavily on ODOT for the maintenance of State Route 32.

Unlike other areas, the Village of Batavia doesn't have water or sewer, this is offered by the County Water Resources Department, so the only incentive they can offer is tax cuts to the developers.

This is a map of the Current Township and Village Boundaries (it shows a large outline map of the Village boundaries), and you can see the tentacles of right-of-way that were obtained to achieve their goals.

Armed with the revenue from these significant expansions, they went after vacant farmland by enticing developers with millions of dollars for development. The Village offers the developers Community Reinvestment Area incentives to annex into the village on undeveloped and virgin farmland. It has always been our understanding that CRA legislation was meant for blighted properties. These incentives are provided with

little to no oversight at the State level. Here is a map of the proposed development and you can see the location adjacent to the Airport. The developer, in his own words, expects to get between \$6 to \$8 million dollars through the CRA legislation. The developer applied for annexation through Type 1 and it was denied by the County Commissioners due to the proximity to the Clermont County Airport and other factors.

Then the developer obtained a sliver of land about 1/3 of an acre to qualify for the Type 2 Annexation with a required 5% border. Nothing else was changed but the added area of 675 feet long by 25 feet wide. Of course, it was bordering the current village and just barely at the required 5% border. They re-applied, and the Commissioners were forced to approve.

Our area of Clermont County is experiencing growth due to improvements on State Route 32. While this has increased demand for development, the Village continues to offer staggering incentives to annex, which is at the cost of all local services; there needs to be some local oversight and some checks and balances to excessive annexations.

We would like to see School Boards have more oversight on incentives that are offered as part of annexations, we would like to see approval of TIFs or other tax incentives be added to the annexation bill to protect school districts.

The village has offered incentives, which are projected to cost the Batavia Local School District millions over the next 15-20

years. How can that school district thrive on these types of reductions while adding more students?

The Township and Village mutually operate a Joint Fire/EMS District that serves both the Village and the Township. The 3 recent large developments have a projected 1,500 homes that will not give additional funding to the Joint Fire/EMS District for services.

We have repeatedly heard that a housing shortage exists in the State of Ohio and that growth is needed. We agree that growth should happen if the need and desire exist. It should be thoughtful and planned with proper zoning. We disagree with a tactic and legislation that allows any jurisdiction to incentivize developers at the cost of neighboring jurisdictions and school districts.

These incentives will cost the remaining Township Residents additional taxes for levied services, such as the shared fire/EMS district and the local school district. It is not responsible for a jurisdiction of less than 2,000 who were elected by less than 300 voters in the 2021 election to determine funding for over 27,000 residents and negatively impact safety and education services in the entire community. We could offer the same legal incentives. We would have a crisis on our hands with our fire district and our schools, which is why this legislation is so important and why we have come here today.

We like the proposed House Bill 113 and how it would modify the legislation, allowing for oversight by the County Commissioners. We understand this puts the County Commissioners in the middle of local jurisdictions. As you can see in Clermont County, we need some oversight to consider the greater good for the whole Community in every type of annexation. It would only seem prudent to consider safety services and local school districts' funding to evaluate situations like ours that negatively impact communities. This legislation would provide for more responsible growth in Ohio, while not limiting the rights of property owners to annex.

Thank you for your time, we are ready to answer any questions that you might have.



