

Testimony of Wade H. Westfall
Vice-President, Board of Miami County Commissioners
Before the Ohio House – April 2025

Chairman, Members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I come to you not just as a Commissioner, but as someone with decades of experience in development. I understand the importance of growth. But I also understand that growth, when mismanaged, can undermine the very communities it's meant to support.

The current annexation process—especially Type 2 and Type 3 expedited annexations—cuts counties and townships out of the conversation. This is particularly alarming when these annexations cross county lines, as we're now experiencing in Miami County with Huber Heights encroaching into Bethel Township. Let me be clear: annexation is not the problem. The problem is how it's being done. When counties and townships aren't part of the planning process, the result is poorly coordinated development, infrastructure overload, strained school systems, and zoning chaos. Communities are left to deal with the consequences of decisions they had no say in.

The infrastructure impacts alone are staggering. Counties like ours make long-term plans for roads, utilities, and waste management. When development skips the local process, those plans fall apart—and taxpayers pay the price. In one instance, Huber Heights annexed land without agreeing to provide centralized water—leaving the Miami county potentially responsible for services we didn't approve or plan for.

The same is happening with schools. Township school districts, built around thoughtful planning and taxpayer investment, are now being forced to absorb growth they never expected or budgeted for. And when it comes to zoning, decades of community-driven policy are simply erased. One-sided annexation nullifies carefully crafted plans without local input or accountability.

That's why we're urging this body to reform expedited annexation laws and require that counties and townships have a seat at the table from day one. When all parties are involved early, we get smarter growth, stronger infrastructure, and more resilient communities.

This isn't just a Miami County issue—it's a statewide issue. And the fix is simple: include commissioners early, and let us help guide growth that works for everyone.

Thank you for your time, and for your continued service to the people of Ohio.