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**Ohio General Assembly**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Columbus**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**H.B. 445**

**Local Government**

Chairwoman King, Vice Chairman Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 445.

This legislation is a targeted effort to restore transparency, accountability, and balance to the operation of Ohio's Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs. These entities oversee billions of dollars in transportation investments and play a critical role in shaping regional infrastructure and economic development. Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen several MPOs, particularly those organized under the Council of Governments model, operate with minimal oversight and a growing disconnect from the communities they serve.

This bill is a direct response to very real problems, policies that have hindered interchange construction, pressured local communities into revenue-sharing agreements, and diverted attention from core transportation priorities toward unrelated agendas. When an organization charged with improving mobility instead becomes a barrier to economic growth, it is time for the General Assembly to act.

House Bill 445 proposes four straightforward reforms to address those concerns.

First, the bill requires that the chief executive of any MPO organized as a Council of Governments reside and be employed in the State of Ohio. Leadership of these taxpayer-funded organizations must be fully present and accountable to the people they serve.

Second, the bill ensures balanced governance by prohibiting any MPO from allowing a single county to hold a majority of voting seats. Regional decision-making should reflect regional consensus, not the dominance of one jurisdiction.

Third, the bill allows for realignment based on economic reality. If at least twenty-five percent of a county's workforce commutes into an adjoining MPO's territory, that county's commissioners may petition the Governor for redesignation. This provision recognizes that commuting patterns and economic regions evolve, and that transportation planning should reflect those modern connections.

Finally, the bill establishes a legal compliance safeguard clarifying that MPOs may not adopt policies or standards more stringent than those set in state or federal law. Unelected regional bodies should not be in the business of imposing additional regulatory burdens that can stall infrastructure projects or undermine job growth.

Ohio's MPOs are vital tools for coordinating regional transportation and development. The intent of House Bill 445 is not to weaken them, but to ensure they function with integrity, fairness, and fidelity to their mission. Our constituents deserve MPOs that support, not stifle, Ohio's economic potential.

Chairwoman King, Vice Chairman Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the Committee, thank you for your attention to this legislation and for your commitment to strengthening local governance across our state. We would be pleased to answer any questions the Committee may have.