



House Bill 96 - State operating appropriations for FY 2026-27

Testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee

March 5, 2025

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Rogers, and House Natural Resources Committee members, I am the Health Commissioner for Hamilton County and an active member, and former board member of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC). The association represents the 111 local health districts across Ohio, and part of our mission is to advocate for an effective and efficient local governmental public health system. Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 96, specifically the realignment of solid waste and construction and demolition debris fees and increased community engagement in the landfill application process, as proposed by the Ohio EPA.

The proposed changes in ORC Section 3734.57 restructure disposal fees collected at solid waste landfills to adopt a single uniform fee collected for both solid waste and construction and demolition debris. The uniform fee will remedy the misclassification of waste which occurs due to the desire to have waste classified at a lower fee category when the waste may be a mixture of solid waste and construction debris. The greatest effect this will have in Ohio is on out-of-state waste currently logged as construction and demolition debris, collecting the full solid waste disposal fee will benefit Ohioans, reducing the tendency for Ohio to be the dumping ground for the East Coast. The influx of waste from the East Coast into Ohio, driven by lower disposal fees at Ohio landfills, has had several negative effects on Ohioans. Some of these include environmental impact; community health concerns; local economic and infrastructure strain; and reputation and aesthetic concerns.

The fee change will result in new and/or increased funds for local health districts to manage active landfills and direct new funds to remediate abandoned landfills and clean up open dumps. Additionally, there will be an increase in revenue for Ohio's solid waste management districts and communities that host a solid waste disposal facility, since all loads would be subject to the solid waste fees.

Currently, local health district funding to regulate these waste facilities is minimal and comes from multiple sources – with a very small portion coming from the permit application fee, widely varying tipping fees based on the facility type, and contributions from the local solid waste district, which are completely optional for the solid waste districts to provide. This proposal offered by OEPA will establish a more consistent and reliable funding source for the essential public health work performed by local health districts, including standard compliance inspections and complaint investigations, which provide significant environmental and public health benefits to the communities where these facilities are located as well as all of the residents of Ohio.

In Hamilton County alone, there are Fifty-Four documented and known closed landfills. Many of these sites operated and were closed prior to HB 592 in the late 1980's, when rules were adopted by the Ohio EPA to bring solid waste landfills in line with current location, design, operating, closure, and post closure requirements. Our staff continues to expand our evaluation of the status of these landfills by performing surface water monitoring, biological monitoring, and methane gas monitoring detect impact to the surrounding communities. These fees would support and enhance that work in Hamilton County and throughout Ohio.

These funds, if awarded, would also help address the issue of open dumps throughout the county. In many rural and less-traveled areas, individuals often choose to dispose of waste improperly rather than utilizing licensed landfills. This illegal dumping not only harms the environment but also poses health and safety risks to the community. With adequate funding, health departments across the state could play a critical role in managing and mitigating these sites, ultimately improving public health, environmental quality, and the overall well-being of our communities.

AOHC asks that you vote favorably for the proposed initiative in the budget of the Ohio EPA to realign solid waste and construction and demolition debris fees and increase community engagement to equip the local communities with consistent funds to assure the effective management of landfills across the state of Ohio.

Thank you for your time and attention today. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

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