



Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Opponent Testimony – House Bill 335
House Ways & Means Committee

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Robert Butler, Chief of the Independence Police Department and President of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. I am here on behalf of the OACP and the communities we serve to express our strong concerns regarding House Bill 335.

While I support responsible efforts to address rising property taxes, HB 335, as written, poses significant and immediate risks to public safety and the essential services Ohioans depend on. The proposed elimination of unvoted inside millage would remove more than \$3 billion in stable, predictable revenue from local governments and schools, funding that is the financial backbone for police, fire, EMS, and educational services across Ohio. According to the Ohio Legislative Service Commission, municipalities alone stand to lose over \$650 million annually, with counties losing more than \$850 million and schools \$1.9 billion each year. These staggering losses would far exceed the impact of the 2011 Local Government Fund cuts, which already forced many communities to make difficult choices about staffing and services.

For law enforcement, particularly in smaller and suburban communities, inside millage supports the core functions of our police departments, salaries, training, dispatch, school resource officers, community policing, and even pension and debt service obligations. Without this reliable funding, police departments across Ohio would face hiring freezes, reductions in service, and longer response times, directly undermining our ability to keep our communities safe. The loss of this funding would not only threaten public safety but also erode the trust and relationships we have built through community policing efforts.

While HB 335 allows for the possibility of seeking voter approval to restore inside millage, this would likely result in hundreds or even thousands of new levy requests across the state. Such a scenario would create confusion, voter fatigue, and uncertainty for both residents and local governments, and it is not a practical or sustainable solution to the challenges of rising property taxes.

Before any further action is taken, I urge the committee to consider what specific replacement funding will be provided to offset these massive revenue losses, whether there will be a dedicated and flexible mechanism to ensure municipalities can support police and fire operations

without delay, and if the Local Government Fund formula will be revised to fairly distribute resources to the departments most affected. It is also critical to determine whether county budget commissions will be required to assess and report on the public safety impact before reducing millage, and, most importantly, whether any repeal can be phased in over several years to allow for responsible planning and transition.

Ohioans deserve both fair tax policy and reliable public safety. We cannot provide one at the expense of the other. Without a clear safety net or replacement tools, HB 335, as written, puts both at risk. On behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, I urge you to set aside these provisions from the state budget and instead work with us on a collaborative, thoughtful approach to property tax reform, one that protects our communities and the essential law enforcement services they rely on.

Thank you for your service and consideration. I am committed to working with this committee to keep public safety at the forefront of any reform, and I welcome your questions.