

HB 335 Written Testimony Submittal
(Regards County Budget Commissions, Property and Sales Tax, Funds)
(4th Hearing by Ways and Means Committee 4th on October 15, 2025)

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Ohio House Bill 335.

My name is David Johnson. I am retired currently living in North Ridgeville, Ohio.

First, let me state for the record, I support meaningful reform of Ohio's property taxation system. However, I must define 'meaningful reform' to include public transparency that will, in return, result in a positive aptitude of trust and faith in regards to my State legislative members.

However, at this point in time, unless further clarification is provided, I cannot support proposed House Bill 335 changes to the property taxation system due to my perceived violation of public transparency displayed by the membership of the 136th General Assembly, thereby directly affecting my aptitude of trust and faith that this same body will effectively legislate for the benefit of every Ohio citizen on any topic or issue.

What has recently transpired to reflect my change in trust and faith?

As some members on this Committee may be aware, last week my Lorain County Commissioners passed a Resolution to reduce the real property taxes charged and payable against every homestead in the county subject to the state's Homestead Exemption Program.

I first became aware of this Resolution via several local newspaper articles and television segments, and eventually viewing the County Commissioner meeting of October 7th.

As a retired citizen, I have taken great interest in our State's property taxation system, the impact on property owners due to rising property valuations, and have closely followed various legislative proposals at the State level to effect property taxation reform as documented on the Ohio Legislature website and the Ohio Channel.

This Resolution approved by my County Commissioners, in conjunction with my interest in the property taxation system, led me to ask myself the following question - How did this new Local Option Homestead Exemption 'piggy-back' property tax exemption come into existence?

Using the resources within the Ohio Legislature website, I identified House Bill 335 and its associated LSC Bill Analyses which explained the proposed features of the bill such as school district property taxes, inside millage limits, and the Local Option Homestead Exemption.

I have watched this Committee's posted hearing videos containing proposed House Bill 335. I have read quite a bit of the submitted written testimony in addition to listening closely to the in-person testimony and the resultant verbal interactions between Committee members and in-person testifiers.

In my opinion, these Committee hearings, especially the most recent hearings, have focused mainly on the proposed school district property tax and inside millage limits changes with little to no reference to the Local Option Homestead Exemption.

So then I asked myself the next logical question - How were my Lorain County Commissioners able to pass their Local Option Homestead Exemption 'piggy-back' Resolution if House Bill 335 is still in your Committee with hearings still on-going?

The answer – new Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 319.304.

Further discovery revealed the following:

- Proposed House Bill 335 did not create this new ORC section because this bill is still in Committee status.
- House Bill 96, passed by the entire House of Representatives on April 9th, did not create / include this new ORC section.
- House Bill 96, passed by the entire Senate on June 11th, did not create / include this new ORC section.
- The first appearance of this new ORC section was in the Amended Substitute House Bill 96 Text and Bill Analysis as reported out by the Conference Committee in mid-June with no supporting information available to determine whom originated this new ORC section and whether public hearings were conducted.
- Amended Substitute House Bill 96 containing this new ORC section was passed by both the full House and Senate on June 25th.
- Amended Substitute House Bill 96 was signed into law by the Governor on June 30th and new ORC Section 319.304 became law effective September 30th which then opened a 30-day window for County Commissioners to pass their Resolution.
- On October 7th, the Lorain County Commissioners passed their Resolution to reduce the real property taxes subject to the state's newly modified Homestead Exemption Program.

Lastly, I asked myself this question – is this the normal legislative process I believe is suppose to exist in our State government, was this normal legislative process violated (either intentionally or unintentionally), or is there another legislative process I am not aware of that would allow this to happen?

Actually, the answer to this last question is only a secondary factor in my decision to change my perception regarding public transparency and the impact yo my trust and faith within our State's legislative process.

In my opinion, there was no transparency publicly displayed for proposed Local Option Homestead Exemption initially introduced in House Bill 335 and then assigned to this Committee for further legislative pursuit. Rather, a back-door or end around approach (my words) was used to create / insert new ORC Section 319.304 into Amended Substitute House Bill 96 at the last minute (my words) in order to create an immediate property tax reduction starting as early as possible (i.e., in January 2026), for the perceived benefit of Ohio's Homestead Exemption Program recipients with little or no public hearings or input regarding the potential negative impacts to our local property taxing authorities which

could have produced additional beneficial language change(s) to the proposed Local Option Homestead Exemption.

County Commissioners did not have to be inserted into new ORC Section 319.304 since that only introduced 88 potential property tax reduction scenarios at the County level further exacerbating meaningful property taxation reform. Whether for good or worse, new ORC Section 319.304 simply could have mandated a single property tax reduction methodology to be applied equally across each of Ohio's 88 counties. Further, whether intentionally or unintentionally and specific only to the Local Option Homestead Exemption, I believe you erred when you transferred a portion of your state legislative duties and responsibilities to an unintended group of County Commissioners whom then must decide if ORC Section 319.304 fits their definition of meaningful property taxation reform. Lastly, ORC Section 319.304 will not reimburse local property taxing authorities for their revenue loss from the new Local Option Homestead Exemption, thereby further widening the contentious cost-sharing gap between the State and the various local property taxing authorities.

To that end, I am in opposition to House Bill 335 since I have concluded that members of the 136th General Assembly did not display legislative transparency in a public manner thereby directly affecting my aptitude of trust and faith that this same body will effectively legislate for the benefit of every Ohio citizen on any topic or issue.

At this point I could conclude my written testimony based on the assumption that this was a one-time occurrence pertaining to public transparency displayed by the membership of the 136th General Assembly thereby impacting my trust and faith towards this same membership.

However, during my research I identified another similar property tax-related legislative event that occurred in the State Senate.

As background, members of this Committee may also be aware that, within the same Resolution passed last week by my Lorain County Commissioners, it included a second property tax reduction mandate that will double the 2.5% property tax credit for everyone in the county subject to the State's Owner-Occupied Homes Program contained in previously existing ORC Section 323.152.

Once again I asked myself - How did this new Owner-Occupied Home 'piggy-back' property tax exemption come into existence?

Using the resources within the Ohio Legislature website, I was not able to identify any bill introduced by the Senate that would effect this specific revision to ORC Section 323.152 wherein the State's 2.5% Owner-Occupied Homes Program resides.

Further discovery revealed the following similar sequence of events:

- House Bill 96, passed by the entire House of Representatives on April 9th, did not create / include this revised ORC section.
- House Bill 96, passed by the entire Senate on June 11th, did not create / include this revised ORC section.

- The first appearance of this revised ORC section was in the Amended Substitute House Bill 96 Text and Bill Analysis as reported out by the Conference Committee in mid-June with no information available to determine who originated this revised ORC section and whether public hearings were conducted.
- Amended Substitute House Bill 96 containing this revised ORC section was passed by both the full House and Senate on June 25th.
- Amended Substitute House Bill 96 was signed into law by the Governor on June 30th and revised ORC Section 323.152 became law effective September 30th which then opened a 30-day window for County Commissioners to pass their Resolution.
- On October 7th, the Lorain County Commissioners passed their Resolution to reduce the real property taxes subject to the State's newly revised 2.5% Owner-Occupied Homes Program.

Once again, in my opinion, there was no transparency publicly displayed on the part of the members of the 136th General Assembly in regards to the legislative process pursuit to revised ORC Section 323.152 and the 2.5% Owner-Occupied Homes Program. No initial bill introduced in the Senate, no Senate committee hearings and associated voting approval, not part of the original approved House Bill 96 sent to the Senate, and not part of Amended Substitute House Bill 96 initially approved by the full Senate. Only after Amended Substitute House Bill 96 was sent to the Conference Committee did the revision to ORC Section 323.152 appear. Was this a quid-pro-quo for the Senate in return for inclusion of new ORC Section 319.304 (Local Option Homestead Credit) that the House wanted in the final passage of Amended Substitute House Bill 96?

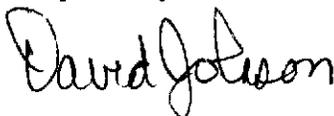
Regardless of my quid-pro-quo theory, once again, a back-door or end around approach (my words) was used to create / insert revised ORC Section 323.152 into Amended Substitute House Bill 96 at the last minute (my words) in order to create an immediate property tax reduction starting in January 2026 for the perceived benefit of Ohio's 2.5% Owner-Occupied Homes Program recipients with little or no public hearings or input regarding the potential negative impact to our local property taxing authorities which could have produced additional beneficial language change(s) to the proposed 2.5% Owner-Occupied Homes Program.

As the saying goes, one property tax-related legislative event such as the first one I described is only a single point. However, two independent property tax-related legislative events by the same legislative body within a short time span describes a trend.

In which case, if such a trend does truly exist, then members of my State legislative assembly must determine the root cause of this trend and, more importantly, determine what corrective actions are necessary in order to prevent future such occurrences.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Respectively,



David Johnson