

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 11/3/25

Name: JT Hackworth

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization X

Organization (If Applicable): Jefferson Township Fire Department

Position/Title: Fire Chief

Address: 9130 Blue Creek Rd

City: Blue Creek State: OH Zip: 45616

Best Contact Telephone: 937-544-5391 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB540

Specific Issue: Conservation Property Tax

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? Written only

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*

### **Jefferson Township Fire Department**

Dear Ohio House Ways and Means Committee,

As a firefighter here in Adams County, I want to thank you for considering House Bill 540. I strongly support what you're trying to do, because I see firsthand how this issue affects us on the ground.

When large organizations like The Nature Conservancy own tens of thousands of acres in our county, that land still needs emergency coverage. We're the ones who get called when there's a brush fire, a lost hiker, or a medical emergency out on one of those back roads. Many of these properties are rough terrain, with long, steep gravel roads that are hard on our trucks and take a lot of fuel to reach. The costs fall on local fire departments and townships that already operate on bare-bones budgets.

Our volunteers give their time for free, but equipment and maintenance aren't free. We hold fish fries, raffles, and pancake breakfasts just to afford new hoses or turnout gear. Even a small payment in lieu of taxes from these large landowners, like your bill proposes, would make a big difference. We could replace outdated gear, keep our brush trucks in better shape, and improve radio coverage in the hills so we can communicate during a call.

This isn't about being against conservation—it's about fairness. When someone owns 20,000 acres and benefits from public programs, it's only right that they help support the local services that keep those areas safe.

Thank you for standing up for the small towns and rural fire departments that keep this county running. We appreciate your leadership and your willingness to speak up for communities like ours.

Respectfully,

JT Hackworth

Jefferson Township Fire Chief