

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 11/3/25

Name: Pastor Ron Rogers and Pastor Owen Applegate

Are you representing: Yourself Organization X

Organization (If Applicable): Wrightsville Church and Appalachian Baptist Church

Position/Title: Pastor

Address: 838 Sunnyview Dr

City: Manchester State: OH Zip: 45144

Best Contact Telephone: 513-218-9830 Email: osamhs@yahoo.com

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

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB540

Specific Issue: Payment in Lieu of Taxes

Are you testifying as a: Proponent X Opponent Interested Party

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

(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

Pastor Owen Applegate

Wrightsville Church

838 Sunnyview Dr

Manchester, OH 45144

Pastor Ron Rogers

Appalachian Baptist Church

702 Rice Dr

West Union, OH 45693

November 3, 2025

Representative Justin Pizzulli

Ohio House of Representatives

77 South High Street

Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Esteemed Members of the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee,

As pastors here in Adams County, we want to offer our strong support for House Bill 540 and the principle it represents: fairness and shared responsibility among those who hold large portions of land in our communities.

Some have asked whether requiring payments in lieu of taxes from major nonprofit landholders might someday open the door to similar measures against churches. We understand that concern deeply, but it's important to make a clear distinction between a nonprofit organization and a church.

Churches are not just property owners, they are active ministries. We give back far more to the community than the value of any property tax exemption. Week after week, we feed the hungry, visit the sick, care for the poor, support local families in crisis, bury the dead, mentor youth, and provide counseling to those struggling with addiction or loss. Our doors are open to everyone, and our mission is rooted in service, not accumulation.

By contrast, large conservation nonprofits like The Nature Conservancy function more like corporate land trusts. They manage vast properties, control assets worth millions, and in many cases generate additional revenue through grants, carbon credits, and tax-deductible donations, all while contributing nothing to the local infrastructure that supports their holdings. Those organizations are structured to preserve wealth and land, not to minister directly to human need.

House Bill 540 does not diminish the sacred role of the church, nor does it threaten religious liberty. First, we are not aware of any church with more than 15,000 acres of land. Second, it simply asks that those who own enormous tracts of land, and already benefit from state programs and public funds, make a reasonable contribution to the local communities that maintain their roads, provide emergency access, and sustain the public services they depend on. That is not taxation; that is partnership.

In Scripture, we are taught that "to whom much is given, much will be required." (Luke 12:48) House Bill 540 reflects that same spirit, calling on those with great resources to share a small portion for the common good.

Thank you for standing up for fairness, stewardship, and the wellbeing of rural Ohio communities. I commend your leadership and pray for wisdom and favor as this bill moves forward.

In Christ,

Pastor Owen Applegate and Pastor Ron Rogers