**Testimony of**
**William V. Sherer, Mayor**
**City of Canton**
**in support of SB 307**

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Troy and members of the Ohio House Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of Senate Bill 307. My name is William V. Sherer and I serve as the Mayor of Canton, a legacy city in northeast Ohio with over 70,000 residents. In Canton, like any city in Ohio, public safety is a primary concern. Senate Bill 307 will allow us the flexibility to use funds generated from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to address gaps in the administration of safety services. The gap in services results from new economic development projects. While economic growth is great, we cannot ignore the increased need for police and fire services. By amending the Ohio Revised Code to include the construction of safety infrastructure as a permissible public infrastructure improvement that can be funded with TIF proceeds, our local services will keep pace with our increased economic opportunities.

Tax increment financing is a powerful and extremely valuable economic development tool that enables communities and private sector developers to work together to fund necessary public infrastructure to facilitate beneficial projects. While the Ohio Revised Code is clear that infrastructure projects, such as roads and utilities, are permissible uses of TIF funds, communities also need to be able to provide safety infrastructure such as police and fire stations proximate to new developments for adequate coverage. Senate Bill 307 would amend the ORC to specifically allow TIF proceeds to be used for the construction of safety facilities.

In May 2023 Amazon opened a new fulfillment center in Canton that employees approximately 700 workers during the regular year and up to 1,000 during peak seasons. The building itself is 1 million square feet. Canton used tax increment financing to support construction of the fulfillment center, specifically, repairs and upgrades to area roads owned or maintained by the city; stormwater and flood management, and costs associated with engineering, permitting, and inspection. Since the completion of the project and the opening of the facility the TIF has generated about $250,000-$350,000 per year which has been critical in helping us continue to maintain the roads around the fulfillment center.

The nearest fire station to the fulfillment center is 2.5 miles away. It is one of the oldest fire stations in Canton and is due for replacement, but the city does not currently have the funds for this necessary project. While the ORC contains an extensive list of allowable public infrastructure costs, fire and safety are not specifically mentioned. This creates a legal gray area as to whether or not communities using TIF can fund the construction of safety facilities along with other public infrastructure that is necessary to support economic development.

In order to address this gray area and bring clarity for both Canton and communities around Ohio, we reached out to Senator Timken and she introduced Senate Bill 307. This bill simply adds the words "buildings for police or firefighting" to the list of public improvements allowed in section 5709.40 of the revised code. This change expands local authority, while maintaining the spirit and purpose of the law as it was originally written. Current law states, "(8) 'Public infrastructure improvement' includes, but is not limited to…" While this language could broadly include safety services, we believe that passing SB 307 would make clear that Canton's planned project fits within the projects permitted in the TIF law.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Senator Timken on behalf of the City of Canton for her willingness to introduce this bill, not only for our community, but also for communities around Ohio that use tax increment financing. I appreciate your consideration of Senate Bill 307, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.